Buddhism Responding to the Needs of the 21st Century Helping the Buddha to turn the Dharma Wheel in the West

Paper presented by Ven. Thich Chan Phap An - representing Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh and the Plum Village International Monastic Sangha - at The World Buddhist Forum April 13-16, 2006 in Hangzhou, China.

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Introduction

In this new century and new millennium, we have a great opportunity for Buddhism. During the last 100-200 years, the seeds of Buddhism have been sown in the West, and we have seen them begin to blossom. Buddhism initially was introduced to the West more on the intellectual level of ideas and concepts. Now we can see it beginning to take root in our practice.

One of the things that Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh and his community of monks and nuns in Plum Village have contributed in the last 30 years, is to bring the teachings from the theoretical to the applied level. We have experienced this movement in many areas. The techniques we use are based on the sutras on the Full Awareness of Breathing, the Four Establishments of Mindfulness and Knowing the Better Way to Live Alone, and on key principles of Mahayana, implemented through the Zen tradition. So our core teachings and practice include the three traditions: original Buddhism as expressed in the sutras just mentioned; the interpretations of the Mahayana tradition; and the Zen tradition as expressed in the way we actually apply the teachings to our daily life.

We have offered these teachings and practices at all different levels of society, from the individual and the family to various larger segments. Our efforts have found success, and we are happy to share this experience with our sisters and brothers of other traditions. We hope that those of other traditions will help us by shining the light of their experience and insight on us and how we can do better. If other

traditions think our way is beneficial, we welcome them to take these methods into new and different areas.

Methods of Practice Taught by Ven Thich Nhat Hanh:

The Sutras on the Full Awareness of Breathing, on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness, and on Knowing the Better Way to Live Alone

The Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing (Anapanasati Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya 118; see Appendix 1) is the foundation of Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh's ("Thay's") teaching in the West. A few years into his monastic life and studies, Thay was very happy to find the teachings of the Buddha recorded in the sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing. The sutra shows us how to be aware of what is happening in the four main areas of our life (our body, our feelings, our mental formations, and our perceptions), so that we can live our life deeply. The insight we get from doing this liberates us from many afflictions such as fear, anger, and craving. When Thay discovered this sutra, he felt he was the happiest man in the world, as if he had found a goldmine. He has continued to practice the teachings of this sutra for the sixty or so years that have gone by since then. According to Thay's understanding and insight, the sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing is a very essential practice for any Buddhist. It is a very safe and very easy way for anyone, even a child, to enter into Buddhist meditation.

The sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing has four sets of exercises concerning the spiritual development of our body, our feelings, our mental formations, and our perceptions. Each of the four sets contains four main exercises. The structure of these exercises is similar from one set to the other, and traces the development of our awareness of each object of meditation. The structure begins with the awareness of the object; then that awareness develops into concentration; and concentration gives rise to liberation.

For example, for the first set of exercises, which concerns the body, the Buddha begins with awareness of the breath. The breath is a bridge between our body and mind. When we become aware of our breath, we begin to harmonize the mind and the body. After a few minutes of practice, the mind and body become unified. As we continue to maintain our awareness, we can learn to relax our body, allowing our body to rest and recover from stress and tension, and this makes healing possible. Based on this understanding, Plum Village has developed the practice of deep relaxation, and the technique of scanning the body to bring awareness to each part. As we scan through, we learn to embrace each part of the body with the energy of mindfulness and help it to release tension and to heal.

The same technique applies to the transformation of our mental formations. We begin to be aware of our mental formations, and whatever mental formation arises in our mind will be embraced, calmed, and ultimately transformed, thanks to the energy of mindfulness. Slowly, slowly, when our mind is calm enough, it reaches concentration. The mind is focused, not wandering around, and eventually that mental formation is liberated. Our mind is free, not dominated or controlled or burdened by that mental formation.

The exercises given by the Buddha in the Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing are brief -- for each set there are only four exercises -- but with this understanding and insight, we are able to develop many exercises. The exercises do not stay stuck in formality; they enter into our daily life in a very natural way. Thay and our earlier spiritual ancestors have devised gathas (practice verses) to support mindfulness in daily life that not only are very useful and easy to apply, but in fact are rooted deeply in the sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing.

Let us take, for example, the gatha "in/out, deep/slow, calm/ease, smile/release, present moment/wonderful moment." In this exercise, we begin to shine our awareness on the in-breath and thus giving rise to the energy of mindfulness, and we say to ourselves "breathing in, I know I'm breathing in;" then, "breathing out, I know I'm breathing out." The exercise is then shortened to two key words, "in/out," and from there our body and mind naturally move into the state of deeper and slower breathing. This is a reflection of our mind being able to settle, calm, and relax. The practice bears further fruit with feeling calm and at ease. We are able to recognize that fruit so that another fruit comes to us, "breathing in, I smile; breathing out, I release." Because we have been able to stop, our mind becomes very clear and we get in touch with the positive elements of life. With the practice of "breathing in, I am in the present moment; breathing out I see this moment

is a wonderful moment," we see life in its true essence in the here and now. In Plum Village, we use mindfulness practice songs to help us remember the gathas and use them in our daily life.

Please stop reading now for a moment; sit up straight, but comfortably; relax; and practice with us.

The Sutra on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness (Satipatthana sutta, Majjhima Nikaya 10; see Appendix 2) goes together with the Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing, helping us to live deeply the present moment and to understand life in that moment. The Four Establishments of Mindfulness help us to deepen our meditation on the four aspects of our being (body, feelings, mental formations and perceptions). They lead us to discover the oneness of the subject of perception and the object of perception, so that we can come to a true understanding of the teaching of the Manifestation Only school of Buddhism. It helps us deepen our insight into the three Dharma seals of non-self, impermanence and nirvana. When we are able to understand these features of the Dharma and apply them continuously in our daily life, we have a chance to attain full liberation.

The exercises prescribed by the Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing and the Sutra on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness can be used when offering guided meditation for beginners who don't know what to do during sitting or walking meditation. We have developed a manual for guided meditation, called The Blooming of a Lotus, which includes thirty-four guided meditation exercises on various subjects, with commentaries explaining their sources.

Another key sutra in our tradition is the Discourse on Knowing the Better Way to Live Alone (Bhaddekaratta Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya 131; see Appendix 3), in which the Buddha taught us to live fully in the present moment -- the only moment in which life is available. The past has gone, and the future has not yet come. This sutra is a direct link between original Buddhism and the Zen tradition of Master Lin Chi (see Zen Roots section below). To miss the present moment is to miss life. This teaching also was well developed by the Buddha in other sutras, such as the Discourse on Teachings Given to the White-Clad Disciple (Upasaka Sutra, Madhyama Agama 128), in which the Buddha pronounced the phrase "dwelling happily in the present moment" (drstadharmasukhavihari, 现法乐住) at least five times. This teaching plays a very important role in our tradition and has developed into the Seal of PlumVillage (discussed in more detail below).

Mahayana principles

In Plum Village, the mind and body are one reality. Our practice does not exclude the body from the mind. The calming and transformation of the body lead to the calming and transformation of the mind; and calming and transforming the mind leads to calming and transformation of the body. So our way of interpreting and applying the sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing is based on the Mahayana teaching that mind and body are one.

Our afflictions and liberation also are one; they inter-are. We can never have a transformation where there is no affliction. Afflictions are the very basis of our transformation. Liberation is the process of understanding deeply the nature and roots of our afflictions. In the Plum Village teaching, there is only transformation; there is no termination of afflictions, only transformation from ill-being to well-being. The existence of well-being is based on the existence of ill-being. Without ill-being, there can be no well-being. In the past, people have thought that we had to terminate our afflictions, completely end them, in order for liberation to manifest; but in fact, it is possible to have joy and happiness in this very moment even if there is still some affliction there as well.

Without a boat, even a small pebble will sink quickly into a river; but with a boat, you can carry tons of rock and it will not sink. It's possible to enjoy happiness even though there are still pebbles of afflictions in our body and mind. Another feature of Plum Village practice is the central importance of the Sangha, which is like the boat. If we allow ourselves to be carried by a sangha, then even if we still have suffering in our body and mind, thanks to the practice of the sangha we will not sink, we still will be able to go through life. Transformation is a process that happens day by day. There is no such thing as a completely self-contained nirvana. Nirvana is a state of mind in which we can see into the nature of reality. The mind can be free even though there are still seeds of afflictions remaining in our alaya vijnana. The teaching on Manifestation Only is used extensively in our tradition as a foundation for understanding these transformations at the base of our consciousness.

Together with the implementation of Mahayana teachings, in Plum Village we emphasize a strong dimension of social engagement. During the war in Vietnam, Thay brought Buddhism "to the streets." When there is so much suffering in the world, the Buddha can not simply remain in the temple; he must go out into the street to help people. For this reason, Thay founded a new Buddhist order, the Order of Interbeing, with Mindfulness Trainings (precepts) that applied the teachings to war situations. Later it was developed more broadly for social engagement and service, mainly social service. The Order of Interbeing very much embodies the bodhisattva ideal of Mahayana Buddhism. (See Appendix 4 for text of the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings of the Order of Interbeing.) To bring more ethical guidelines for responsibility in society, to fulfill the ideals of the Order of Interbeing, Order members are asked to practice strongly the 5 Mindfulness Trainings, i.e. the five precepts given by the Buddha for laypeople.

The Five Mindfulness Trainings have been rewritten by Plum Village in a modern way, so people in modern society can easily accept and understand the teaching and be able to apply it in their daily life (see Appendix 5 for this text). For example, in the Fifth Mindfulness Training, we have expressed the larger concept of mindful consumption, which includes mindful consumption of magazines, books, and TV in addition to not taking drugs or alcohol to protect our body. UNESCO essentially adopted, with very little change, these Mindfulness Trainings and promulgated them in the form of the UNESCO Manifesto 2000, which, by 21 February 2006, was signed by 75 847 655 (close to 76 million) people all over the world (see Appendix 6).

Zen Roots, and the Plum Village Dharma Seal

Thay is in the 42nd generation of Zen Master Lin Chi; we, his students, are in the 43rd generation. In the 35th generation of Master Lin Chi there was Master Lieu Quan, who began a new, Vietnamese dharma line of which Thay belongs to the 8thgeneration, and we his students to the 9th generation. The majority of Vietnamese Buddhists belong to the Lieu Quan dharma line.

In Plum Village, our practice carries a lot of Zen aspects, especially our focus on generating mindfulness in all aspects of daily life, and our reliance on the three trainings of mindfulness (smrti), concentration (samadhi) and insight (prajna) as the path to liberation. Our tradition is strongly rooted in the teachings of Master Lin Chi, especially the teaching that "to walk on Earth is a miracle" （ 地行神通 ）. In many talks, Thay and the monks and nuns of Plum Village have continued Master Lin Chi's Zen teaching in the form of a new Dharma Seal, which is at the same time a continuation of the Buddha's phrase, "dwelling happily in the present moment." Any teaching of Plum Village must bear the Dharma Seal, "I have arrived, I am home."

This Dharma Seal is saying that we can touch nirvana, or the Pure Land, here and now, in the present moment. We don't have to search for a Pure Land that is far from us in space or in the future. The Pure Land is available to us 24 hours a day. The question is: Are we are available to the Pure Land? It is not a separate reality from suffering. We believe that "pain is inevitable, but suffering is optional."

This understanding is very useful for social action. In normal daily life, people might encounter a lot of difficulties; but as soon as they are able to return to their practice, to the awareness of breathing, right there they can be in touch with the freshness and coolness of nirvana. Nirvana has the capacity to cool, to extinguish the fire of afflictions in our body and mind; and as soon as we are able return to awareness of our breathing, in that moment we can touch nirvana deeply.

So, as bodhisattvas, we continue to do the work of transforming society, and as a practical matter we don't hope to reach a place where there is no suffering. Suffering has to exist as the raw material for the bodhisattva to do the work of transformation. There can not be a Pure Land without suffering. Plum Village has come to a new definition of the Pure Land: where understanding and compassion are, there is the Pure Land. From this Zen perspective on the reality of our suffering and our happiness, we encourage people to maintain their practice in every moment of their daily life, continuously. Whether sitting, walking, sleeping, or engaging in any other kind of activity, we all are encouraged to touch the Pure Land in every moment as we practice walking in mindfulness, sitting meditation, listening to the sound of the bell, and mentally reciting various gathas for various activities. Plum Village has introduced the portable Pure Land -- just like a portable phone (or: instant coffee -- instant Pure Land). We can have a Pure Land, instantly, wherever we go!

Practicing contemplation and action together, we base our actions only on the ground of stability, clarity and compassion. Then every action can be right action. We can build a temple, work in a hospital, or start a business, but we do not lose our stability, clarity and compassion to projects and stress.

Building Monastic Community

In Plum Village, we believe that in order for Buddhism to take root in the West, there must be a very strong monastic community. So far, in Western Buddhism the building of monastic community has not been emphasized, due to the decline of monastic culture in the West. Most people in the West do not look on monastic community, whether Christian or otherwise, as a place of refuge; hence Buddhism has entered the West primarily through the laity rather than through monastics. In Plum Village we believe that, for lay Buddhism to develop and grow, there must be a monastic culture existing in parallel, to hold the practice and to form the foundation on which Buddhism can enter into the society.

We have tried in the last 30 years to build a monastic community based strongly on brotherhood and sisterhood. Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh has observed that if we do not structure the monastic community as a family, we will not be able to last very long. Historically, in Asian countries, most monastic communities are structured like blood families with an elder monk acting like a father, an elder nun like a spiritual mother, elder brothers and sisters, and younger spiritual brothers, sisters, sons and daughters.

In our monastic community, we do not practice so much devotion, or teaching the lay people to pray to the Buddha to solve their problems. We try to develop our understanding and insight so that meditation and social service are the core of our monastic life. We still have the religious aspect; but it is very minimal. We do not perform a lot of ceremonies. We have a lot of meditation in our daily life – sitting, walking, playing or working. All aspects of our life are viewed as meditations in which we stop and look deeply.

During the last 20 years, we have tried our best to update the Pratimoksha that has been handed down to us through thousands of years. In 2003, during a trip to Korea, we were able to release a first draft Revised Pratimoksha to help monastics to practice in modern times. We have received a lot of input from monks and nuns of different traditions. A final revised Pratimoksha has been published since then, and is available on our website, www.plumvillage.org. We have kept the structure of the traditional Pratimoksha according to our tradition which is in the Dharmagupta school; but many precepts have been rewritten to help protect monks and nuns encountering the challenges posed by 21st century society. For example, we have added provisions concerning the skillful use of motor vehicles, mobile phones, the Internet, e-mail, and so on.

In our community, while the importance of seniority is very much respected, the hierarchical element of monastic life has been reduced to a minimum and the more democratic Sanghakarman procedure is used for decision-making in all aspects of community life. This approach is actually closer to the tradition of the original Sangha. The role of the abbot is to take care of the spiritual life of the members of the community, rather than being consumed in administrative tasks.

A “caretaking council” composed of younger brothers or sisters of the community oversees the day to day operations of the community, and a dharma teacher council is responsible for guiding all matters concerning the practice of the community; but all final decisions are in the hands of the bhikshu or bhikshuni council. These fully ordained monks or nuns are the ultimate governing body of the community.

In our community, we transform together as one sangha body. We do not emphasize so much the career or progress of the individual. The most important element of community life is the cultivation of real brotherhood and sisterhood. Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh has said in his more than sixty years as a monk, he has found there is no higher principle or ideology than brotherhood and sisterhood. Fame or other forms of success are not worth trading for brotherhood and sisterhood.

It is in this spirit that we practice shining light, a very sincere sharing offered to each member from all the other members of the community concerning the strengths and weaknesses in that member’s practice. Every year, we practice the three-month rains retreat during the winter season. Traditionally, shining light is offered at the Pavarana ceremony at the end of the rains retreat

from just one community member to another. In Plum Village, each member receives shining light from all other members of the community, and we take the time necessary to accomplish this. Then, at the Pavarana ceremony, a shining light letter summarizing the insights shared by the whole community is given. It is a very deep practice to receive so much wisdom from the eyes of the whole Sangha. In Buddhist tradition, we have spoken of the Buddha eyes and the Dharma eyes, but not yet of the Sangha eyes. In Plum Village we are developing the understanding and action of Sangha eyes. The Sangha eyes contain the Buddha eyes and the Dharma eyes.

Due to the needs of modern society, monastic dharma teachers are not enough to satisfy the demand for receiving the teachings. In the past twenty years, we have trained lay as well as monastic practitioners to become dharma teachers in our tradition. We have transmitted the lamp of wisdom to nearly 200 monastic and lay teachers. The dharma teachers are trained, not to lead ceremonies, but to have the understanding and depth in their practice to be able to help people transform their suffering. Our lay dharma teachers are in many countries. We have approximately 700 local sanghas practicing all around the world, and most of them do not have a dharma teacher to lead their practice. Hence there is a great need for dharma teachers everywhere.

Social Service: Rural Development, Care for the Dying

When we have worked in rural development, we have learned not to impose our urban knowledge on people. Even if we are engineers or doctors, we need to look and listen deeply to see how people can heal themselves and their situation. Then we try to adapt and add our knowledge and experiences to what they already have. We help people to help themselves; we don't just throw money at them and say, "Here, take this and set up a medical center." We come to learn, and build from the strengths that are already there. The question we ask is, "Can we do something here, using the knowledge of the village elders and experts, to help them set up their own school or medical center?" If they are blocked in some way, then we offer proposals for them to discuss. When they say they need money, we ask, can we find materials from here? How about a bamboo thatch-roof school? Our financial aid is just for the last part, and this way, people feel it is their own project and they will care for it. It is a true cooperation between trained experts and the local people.

When we have practiced and taught about caring for the dying, we don't advocate describing some kind of paradise to which the dying person is going. We remind the person of what is wonderful from the life they have lived, because the Buddha said that when we leave this body, we take with us the consequences of our actions. If the person can speak, we ask him or her to tell us what were the most wonderful things in his or her life, so we can water the person's good seeds, to be carried forward upon leaving this life. We revisit positive times with them, such as when they saved living beings. We show them that the talents that manifested in their own life are not now lost, but already have been reborn in new forms in their sons and daughters, and they can see they don't have to die for this rebirth to take place. In this way, many people have been able to die peacefully and lightly.

Bringing the Practice and the Pure Land to People in All Walks of Life

Over the past 30 years, Plum Village has offered many, many retreats to bring this portable Pure Land -- based on the practice of meditation techniques from original Buddhism, Mahayana Buddhist ideals of service, and concrete practices from Zen Buddhism -- to every corner of society. We are in the process of creating a new book about this work of engaged Buddhism, which we will summarize here.

Summer and other regular retreats

Every year, Plum Village organizes a four-week summer opening which attracts thousands of people -- old and young, couples, families with children, etc. -- from more than 40 countries to come and practice with us. The retreatants are required to stay for at least one week so they can really stop and calm themselves, for transformation to be possible. Every week, Thay, plus one other dharma teacher in rotation, each give one dharma talk each day, in languages that rotate between English, French, and Vietnamese with simultaneous translation into many languages including German, Dutch, Italian,

Spanish, and Portuguese. People are guided in different practices like sitting meditation, listening to the bell, walking meditation, awareness of breathing, deep relaxation, touching the Earth (prostrations), listening to dharma talks, watering positive seeds in their alaya vijnana, recognizing and transforming negative habit energies, communicating compassionately with their loved ones, practicing Beginning Anew to express skillfully their difficulties with their beloved, stopping and looking deeply. (For more details on our more innovative practices such as listening to the bell, touching the Earth, Beginning Anew, and hugging meditation, see Appendix 7 for excerpts from our orientation booklet describing these practices.)

One of the strongest aspects of Plum Village practice is the dharma discussion, in which our lay friends meet in a smaller group and share their joys and their difficulties with other members of the sangha. We have learned that the power of deep listening by the sangha -- truly being there, present, in silence and allowing the person to share deeply from their heart -- brings a great deal of healing and deep transformation to our retreatants. We also have in each week a festival, in which retreatants can express themselves, enjoy the present moment, and recognize and cultivate the seeds of joy in themselves together with the community.

The majority of new retreatants request formal transmission of the Five Mindfulness Trainings and commit themselves to bringing the practice back home with them. They are encouraged to come together to recite the precepts regularly to keep the practice growing. Many people begin to have the seeds of bodhisattvas flowering in them and join an existing local sangha, or start a new one.

In Plum Village, we offer our lay friends a considerable amount of contact to learn from our monastics. We do not hire staff to work for us; all the monks and nuns organize themselves and the lay retreatants into different working teams to make the retreat possible. Working alongside the monastics as they practice mindfully walking, working, listening deeply, and using loving speech, the lay people receive the dharma in a very natural way. Monastics also offer consultations to lay friends who need more specific guidance in dealing with very difficult situations in their lives, such as divorce, conflict among family members, physical or sexual abuse, death, grief and severe depression.

In Plum Village, we believe that the dharma is not complicated; it can be easily accessible, even to children. In the first twenty minutes of each of his dharma talks in the summer, Thay introduces an aspect of practice to children in a very gentle and simple way that the children can understand. The children are seated in the very front rows of the Dharma hall, to help Thay give the most appropriate teachings by receiving their attention directly. We have seen that children are capable of receiving the Dharma even more naturally than adults, who come with a lot of their own knowledge and life experience which can prevent them from fully receiving the Buddha’s teachings.

Later, in groups, we share with the children ways of implementing the teachings offered in the morning, through various activities. We usually share about the importance of fostering a sense of inclusiveness among the group of children, and a spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood. We start with a “core” group of children who already have practiced in Plum Village for some years; they help guide the other children by playing the role of elders taking care of the younger ones. This helps create strong bonds among the members of the group, as well as mutual recognition of each other’s values and talents. Everyone is offered a space to express himself and to be listened to, thus recovering a sense of social integration often lacking among the children in the West. We always use stories and different kinds of play to convey the essence of the practice to the young ones.

The practice of the pebble meditation is a very effective one that is always introduced to the children in a Dharma talk. We go for a walk, searching for four nice pebbles for each person. These pebbles will represent, respectively, a flower, a mountain, water, and space. Each of these four elements symbolizes a quality that helps guide our sitting meditation and make it more vivid. The flower represents the capacity for freshness within us; the mountain, our solidity; water, the clear mirroring of every thing just as it is; and space, the freedom that we experience in meditation.

We also transmit the two trainings for children, also called the “Two Promises” (see Appendix 8). These are the two main precepts about developing understanding and compassion to protect the lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals. At the beginning of the same weekly ceremony in which adults will receive the Five Mindfulness Trainings, children formally take refuge in the Three Jewels and receive the Two Promises in the presence of their parents, friends and the whole Sangha.

Singing practice is another important and joyful aspect of our community, and it allows children to incorporate the practice easily through singing dharma songs about breathing in and out and seeing oneself as a fresh flower, a solid mountain, and so on.

We try to create opportunities for parents and children to implement the practice together, planting seeds for them to continue their practice back home. Practices such as inviting the bell to sound and listening deeply to the bell, walking meditation, eating in silence, juice & tea meditation, and Beginning Anew ("watering" the "flowers" in one another), help families a great deal to recover and strengthen harmony and trust. In fact, we feel it is crucial to involve the parents in the program as much as possible.

At the beginning of their week in Plum Village, many children who have come for the first time are shocked and upset to be in a place with no television or electronic games. By the end of the week, many do not want to leave Plum Village at all, and they want to come back. Upon returning home, they often help their parents come back to their practice, e.g. by inviting a bell to sound when a difficult or tense situation arises in the family.

For teenagers, we encourage them to reflect, before and immediately after their arrival in Plum Village, about what they may be seeking in coming here and what is relevant and meaningful in their lives or in a path of practice. We do our best to help them feel at ease, such as by housing them together in a large room and/or special camping area reserved just for them. We invite them to join the Sangha's work by watering our small trees, bushes and flowers, working in small groups every evening after dinner. This helps them to have a sense of sisterhood/brotherhood, responsibility and solidarity, as well as a feeling that they are really at home and can help care for that home. In our contacts with teenagers and young adults, we have observed how much they need to feel responsible and trusted. Teens likewise appreciate being involved in decisions regarding the group. They like, for example, to help make decisions on the schedule they will be following for the retreat.

Every morning after the first Dharma talk, teen boys and girls are together in one group. We play games, share dharma discussions, or go for a mindful walk. In the afternoons and evenings, teen boys and girls each practice and play in their own respective groups. We nurture our mindfulness and joy by doing artwork together, singing, and being out in nature. Artwork is especially appropriate at the end of the week as a way of encouraging teens to express the experiences and feelings that they had during their time in Plum Village. We call upon our adult retreatants with experience in art, theater, dance, music and many other endeavors, to come and share their skills with the teens. We also may like to share concrete practices for relating well with our parents and improving communication.

A few examples of activities we share with teens:

- Arranging a space together in a hut, making it our own by contributing decorations and artistic creations. We go out for a walk and pick up elements from Nature, then go back to the hut and sit down in a circle. We share what the piece of nature that we brought back means for us. We may invite each person to make a vow or wish or prayer associated with the gift that Mother Earth provided us, whether the vow is expressed silently inside of us, aloud, or written on a piece of paper. Then we place our sacred object on a table where there are flowers, fruits, candles and incense; the whole ensemble becomes an altar.

- "Dharma drama": play-acting something that has been shared in the group or in the Dharma Talk concerning communication, deep listening, loving speech, etc. We could write down proposed themes on pieces of paper and then pass a basket containing the papers around the circle for everyone to pick a subject. Groups of at least three people may be formed for sharing a skit.

- An outing to a nearby lake is a very important time for teens to spend time together joyfully, outside the monastery. The group has an opportunity to relate to one another and especially to the staff in a very informal way. It is a good chance for teens to play together and then sit down for sharing, and the sharing may come from a deeper place with much sincerity. This is also a very appropriate time to practice "flower watering" in a Beginning Anew session towards the end of the week.

We have been relying on "seed teens," teenagers who are already strong in the practice and want to participate in the program as part of the staff. They are a very useful bridge between the monastery and the young people coming in from the world outside, promoting good communication and understanding within the group. They are like a kind of glue bonding the different participants in the program, since they are both teenagers and practitioners.

One of the main challenges to keeping a group unified is the language barrier. Affinity groups naturally do form around shared languages; but that doesn't prevent the possibility of interactions between these groups -- hence the importance of shared activities involving everyone at the same time, such as dharma discussion and mealtimes. It is crucial to provide as much translation as possible, because this is what helps the group to connect by sharing the same reality.

In addition to the large summer retreats, Plum Village offers ongoing opportunities for retreat throughout the year for lay friends to come and practice with us. Every two years, we offer a 21-day retreat with daily talks by Thay in English, going deeply into a particular area of teaching and practice. Many long-term, experienced practitioners, Dharma teachers and Order of Interbeing members come to these retreats. This coming June, Thay and the sangha will offer a 21-day retreat, "The Breath of the Buddha."

USA and other tours

Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh and the other monastics travel quite a lot to offer retreats in the United States and in many other countries, including Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Germany, Holland, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Macau, Norway, Poland, Russia, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam. We frequently offer retreats lasting five to seven days, which are commonly attended by 400 to 1200 people, as well public talks attended by 1,000 to as many as 10,000. At the end of a retreat, there is always a ceremony to transmit the Five Mindfulness Trainings, and as in the summer retreat, a majority of new retreatants, i.e. several hundred people in each retreat, formally receive the Five Mindfulness Trainings and join a sangha or start a new one to continue their practice when they return home.

Special retreats

The first retreat Thay offered especially for a particular interest group was in 1985, for environmentalists. Thay taught from the Diamond Sutra, which says there are four notions that must be released: the notion of self; the notion that humans are higher than other living beings; the notion of living beings; and the notion of a lifespan. He taught that we humans are not higher than trees, plants and minerals, and we have to live in harmony with them. He declared the Diamond Sutra the earliest text advocating environmental protection.

The second special retreat was for artists, in 1987. There were musicians, sculptors, painters, writers, and others. Thay believes that the arts can be a much deeper and more powerful means of communication than normal human discourse. He taught that artists have to practice stopping, relaxing, and looking deeply in order to create responsible art. Art can be very destructive, or it can be very constructive; a terrible scene can be depicted in a way that helps people be more responsible and work for change. Thay discussed the Sutra on the Son's Flesh (Samyukta Agama 373) as a very important teaching for the 21st century. He also discussed these themes in a special retreat for members of the film-making industry in Hollywood, in 2003.

Also around 1987, Thay offered a retreat for children. There were 100 people there and we invited a lot of "seed" children who already knew the practice, to help the other children want to practice. We paid 20 plane tickets for seed children to attend. Of course, we accepted the children's parents in the retreat as well, so they could learn how to practice with their children. The retreat ended with hugging meditation, and the children were asking their parents why they had to leave.

Next came a retreat for peace activists, in 1989. Thay taught that we have to know how to write "love letters" to our lawmakers and president, instead of shouting at them. We can demonstrate in a way that is powerful, while still embodying peace and compassion in our own heart, and touching the same in others instead of their anger.

All of Thay's life work is for peace and for human rights. We always try to bring justice to the world. Thay teaches that we only can change people if we are their friend. If you are their enemy, then even if you are powerful, they may obey while they have to; but they'll find a way to get around you. There is a great deal that we can share about our work for peace and human rights -- too much for us to share in detail for this paper; we hope you can have an opportunity to read one or more of our books on this subject, such as Love in Action by Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh and Learning True Love by Sister Chan Khong.

An inter-religious retreat was offered the following year, with participation from Jewish, Protestant, Catholic, and Buddhist practitioners. We celebrated Passover and Easter, enjoying Easter eggs and practicing the Eucharist and the washing of feet from the Christian tradition. We emphasized that we should not be telling each other how wonderful this or that tradition is, but tasting it through practice. Grape juice was used in place of wine for Catholic and Jewish rituals.

Thay and the sangha offered a retreat for psychotherapists in which the first 4 days were entirely silent. Some of the psychotherapists attending had been expecting something more like a professional conference, and were unhappy with the silent time at first. The purpose of the silence was to help them calm their thinking and restore their stillness and clear mind, so they could be empty enough to listen to their clients, understand their suffering, and then offer them a truly insightful prescription for healing. Thay encouraged them to use whatever instrument is appropriate, and not to be caught in the doctrines of this school or that school of psychology. By the end of the retreat, the psychotherapists had experienced deep transformation enabling them to see that the "buddha" in each of them could help them to help their patients. Thay also spoke against the practice of pillow beating as a means of "venting" anger, and now it seems more psychologists agree that "venting" just waters the seeds of violence, rehearses negative mental formations and actually makes it more likely that someone will act violently.

Thay has offered several retreats in the USA for veterans of the war in Vietnam. The first such retreat was very challenging to offer. Thay explained to the veterans that they are at the white-hot tip of the burning candle, but the whole collective consciousness had given rise to the war and is responsible for what happened, not only these veterans. He asked everyone to find a tree, sit by it, write down their own experience and shine light on their compassion or their anger, and give the writing to Thay so his talks would be relevant for them. When Thay and Sr. Chan Khong read the letters, they suffered a lot, because there were a number of descriptions of cruel acts against Vietnamese people including children. One man described how, after shooting for three days from a helicopter, he saw all the human bodies strewn about like logs. He was so shocked because while in the helicopter, he never imagined it was like that. At the retreat he saw a very young Vietnamese woman who, he said, looked like the people he had killed. Another revealed that he had not been able to practice walking meditation with the sangha because, when he looked at the Vietnamese monastics, he was afraid of being ambushed by them.

Thay taught the veterans that when they take the Five Mindfulness Trainings and make the vow not to kill, they are transformed. He said, "You may have killed a child before; but you can save five children from death every day, now, in the present moment. Do the opposite of what you did before." Thay asked them to write down their painful experiences and then burn these papers to represent their new freedom, that they were new persons. He used a flower to sprinkle water on everyone, to wash them clean. Then they practiced hugging meditation with Vietnamese. All the Vietnamese Americans who lived nearby were invited to come and participate, and the veterans practiced hugging them to feel that the Vietnamese could forgive them and now they were friends. Three retreats just for veterans were held; now the program for veterans is offered as one part of our larger, general interest retreats.

A retreat was offered in Plum Village especially for business leaders. Thay told a very powerful and true story about a businessman who was always asking his wife and family to wait a little longer for him to be there for them, because his enterprise was in a certain stage where it could not be managed without him. He said that maybe after two or three years, he would be able to spend more time with them. The man ended up dying young, before that stage ever arrived – and the company replaced him within hours. This story was shared to wake up the retreatants and bring home the importance of living the reality of impermanence.

Thay taught the retreatants that we have to live in harmony with those few people who are closest to us, then widen our circle of concern out to our five, or twenty, or even one thousand employees. He said that business leaders should give their employees more time to eat their lunch, and they should eat with them, and even consider offering them total relaxation practice at the workplace. Employees should be treated like one's own partners, and business leaders should show care and concern about their employees' lives and families. Recently Thay met a Chinese doctor who had been too indifferent to his employees, and one of them became disgruntled and poisoned the doctor and his family. Only the doctor himself survived. Three months after the retreat for business leaders ended, many reported that it continued to have positive effects on their

way of relating with their employees and others. Thay's talks at this retreat were made into a book, Power, which has already sold 200,000 copies in Korea.

Several years ago, Thay went to offer a day of mindfulness practice to prisoners at a maximum-security prison in Maryland, USA. We had to go through sixteen doors, each one locking heavily behind us as soon as we had passed through it. The inmates listened to Thay describe the practice of eating mindfully, after which the food was served. They gulped it down very fast; then they looked at the monastics still eating, mindfully; perhaps that may have made more of an impression on them than the teaching in words. Many of the men appeared to be transformed. They asked, "Can I really change my life?" and they sought to start doing good things already from right there in prison.

Many things were not permitted to be brought into the prison with us, including recording devices such as the video camera we normally use to record Thay's teachings. So we asked the officials to record the teachings with their own equipment. We asked permission for Thay to bring in his own tiny mini-disc recorder, which we normally use as a backup. At first they refused, but then they allowed it. This was a good thing, because their equipment didn't work, and from our recording came the small book Be Free Where You Are which has been translated into several languages already.

During his tour offering retreats around the USA in 2003, Thay offered a retreat that was initially intended specifically for police officers, prison officials, and others working in law enforcement. The target audience then was broadened to include others in public service, particularly school teachers. In his talks, Thay emphasized that law enforcement workers need to practice peace, to practice walking mindfully and relaxingly to calm themselves, and to take care of their family and not treat them like underlings. The officers disagreed with Thay about walking relaxingly, saying they could get shot at from any side in dangerous areas of a city. Thay then recommended that when they go home to their own neighborhood, they practice walking meditation before going in to see their family, their foundation of peace.

We learned the shocking statistic that many more police officers are shot by their own hand than in service. The stress of their jobs also pushes many of them to drink heavily. We proposed that they create a kind of spiritual family at their workplace, and that they read and discuss the Five Mindfulness Trainings, to make life more centered and meaningful. This way, they could have greater freshness, friendship and connection with their co-workers, like a family supporting each other. To help these public employees to do all of this in an absolutely non-sectarian way (so as to preserve the separation of church and state mandated by the U.S. Constitution), we performed a ceremony to transmit the Five Mindfulness Trainings with all "Buddhist" language removed from the precepts and the ceremony.

For the school teachers at this and other retreats, Thay has said that the school is like a second chance for children who come from broken families to receive the nurturing they need. Teachers must practice listening to their children, offering them not only knowledge, but also compassion and the appropriate teaching that each individual child needs. Thay encouraged teachers to use skillful means to introduce mindfulness practice in the classroom, like designating one child each day to clap her hands every fifteen minutes, for everyone to stop what they are doing and just breathe.

On the same 2003 tour, Thay also held a very special retreat for members of the U.S. Congress. Thay spoke to them about the circles of concern, starting with one's own nuclear family and then making the staff like another family, and so on. The members of Congress are so busy, flying back and forth between their home districts and Washington D.C. When they get to their office, there are so many things they must quickly read and resolve. Many of the members who participated in this retreat said that practicing walking meditation from their office to the voting place was the most helpful tool for them.

In various retreats, Thay has spoken to the concerns of parents. He has said that many single mothers may think they have to find a man to help support them and their child; but often, searching for this can make things even more complicated than one's own task of having to be both father and mother. Thay taught these single mothers to focus more on their own practice and on making themselves strong, solid, happy and peaceful; then, if the partnership comes by itself, that is good. To all parents, Thay has said that children are the parents' continuation into the future, and parents are the children's continuation back into times past. In reality we do not have a separate self. The input coming into this generation of children from society is so different from the input into their parents' generation; so even when a parent's weakness manifests in the child, it may not be

recognized because it looks different, it manifests in a different way. When you look deeply, you can only say, "You look like me."

At a retreat held in Oldenburg, Germany, a few years ago, Thay spoke about the importance of reconciling with family members from whom we've grown apart, before it is too late. It was the fifth day of the retreat, and he encouraged people to reconcile with family members by midnight that night. For those who had family members there at the retreat with them, it could be done in person. For those whose family members were far away (the majority), Thay authorized them to use their cell phones to call and heal their relationships. The following day, four men came and reported to Thay that, thanks to the teachings on deep listening and the practices at the retreat, they had been able to use their cell phones the previous night and reconcile with their fathers – something they had not believed possible before attending the retreat. We are sure there were many others who also reconciled, but were too shy to come and report it to Thay. This is something that occurs, in one way or another, with every retreat we offer.

From January to April, 2005, Thay was able to make an historic return trip to his homeland of Vietnam, from which he had been exiled for 40 years. There were many people in the Vietnamese government who were extremely fearful that Thay, and the 100 monastics and 100 lay friends in his delegation, would make demonstrations and disturbances. At Thay's first public lecture, in Hanoi, when our senior monk Thay Phap An arrived one hour before the lecture was to begin, he saw security everywhere, apparently due to fear of a riot breaking out. To the great surprise of Thay and the delegation, only eighteen people were allowed to enter the hall to hear Thay's talk; but Thay spoke just as if there were 300 or 3,000 people in attendance.

After the delegation had conducted a number of visits and talks in various locations, and due to the very patient and compassionate attitude of the delegation in dealing with authorities, the level of the authorities' fear decreased significantly. Thay was permitted to offer a second public lecture, in Saigon, and this time 600 people including government and police officers were invited. At our request, loudspeakers were placed outside the building, and so close to 1,000 people got to listen. Then in Hue, another public talk was organized, with 600 people inside, and speakers outside with thousands of people listening. When the delegation returned to Hanoi, Thay spoke at the political institute, and then one more lecture was organized in a big hotel with 600 invited people in the main room and an overflow area with 200 people.

While in Vietnam, Thay offered the government seven points of recommendation (see Appendix 9) to allow the Buddhist church in Vietnam to heal itself and help reduce the suffering of Vietnamese people due to social ills such as the drug trade. He proposed mutual acceptance and reconciliation between the two opposing camps of the divided Buddhist church, saying we should discuss as brothers, not shout as enemies. A high monk who used to speak angrily on this subject now speaks kindly. The attitude of the Vietnamese government has changed; it is giving sincere respect and attention to Thay's proposals, and showing much more respect for Buddhism and what it can do to help Vietnamese society. The government has allowed the formation of many local groups of the Buddhist organization that previously did not have government approval.

Just as those men at the retreat in Oldenburg, and so many other retreats, have found that deep listening works on the family level, in Vietnam we found that deep listening is also highly effective at the broader level of society.

Conclusion

We have presented here some ways of applying core Buddhist teachings to everyday life in modern times. There is still a wealth of Buddhist teachings whose applications are yet to be explored, much work to be done to renew the teachings of the Buddha. The psychology and understanding of our society are different from those in the Buddha's time. Advances in science, technology and medicine have been growing exponentially, and we have gained many new insights into nature. For Buddhism to be relevant and concretely applicable to modern life, there must be a deeper understanding and renewal of the teachings. It is a duty of all Buddhists in modern times to remain true to their roots, but at the same time to bring forth the teachings in a very intelligent way so that the people can accept and benefit from them.

For 2600 years, the Buddhist tradition has developed many techniques of practice. In our small capacity and humble efforts, we have tried, and we see it is possible, to renew Buddhism and bring it into the modern world. We hope this effort will be taken up by all Buddhists. We have only scratched the surface and there is still a long, long way to go. In Plum Village, we see our community as a Buddhist “laboratory” where we eXperiment with new “medicines.” When a medicine is proven effective in our laboratory, we offer it to the world. We have shared in this paper about some of our experiments and techniques we have found to be useful. We invite our sisters and brothers of other traditions to join in this approach, and help the Buddha to turn the Dharma Wheel again, in the West in the 21st century.

Appendix 1: Excerpt from the Discourse on the Full Awareness of Breathing

Part II

“O bhikkhus, the method of being fully aware of breathing, if developed and practiced continuously, will have great rewards and bring great advantages. It will lead to success in practicing the Four Establishments of Mindfulness. If the method of the Four Establishments of Mindfulness is developed and practiced continuously, it will lead to success in the practice of the Seven Factors of Awakening. The Seven Factors of Awakening, if developed and practiced continuously, will give rise to understanding and liberation of the mind.

“What is the way to develop and practice continuously the method of Full Awareness of Breathing so that the practice will be rewarding and offer great benefit?

“It is like this, bhikkhus: the practitioner goes into the forest or to the foot of a tree, or to any deserted place, sits stably in the lotus position, holding his or her body quite straight, and practices like this: ‘Breathing in, I know I am breathing in. Breathing out, I know I am breathing out.’

1. ‘Breathing in a long breath, I know I am breathing in a long breath. Breathing out a long breath, I know I am breathing out a long breath.’
2. ‘Breathing in a short breath, I know I am breathing in a short breath. Breathing out a short breath, I know I am breathing out a short breath.’
3. ‘Breathing in, I am aware of my whole body. Breathing out, I am aware of my whole body.’ He or she practices like this.
4. ‘Breathing in, I calm my whole body. Breathing out, I calm my whole body.’ He or she practices like this.
5. ‘Breathing in, I feel joyful. Breathing out, I feel joyful.’ He or she practices like this.
6. ‘Breathing in, I feel happy. Breathing out, I feel happy.’ He or she practices like this.
7. ‘Breathing in, I am aware of my mental formations. Breathing out, I am aware of my mental formations.’ He or she practices like this.
8. ‘Breathing in, I calm my mental formations. Breathing out, I calm my mental formations.’ He or she practices like this.
9. ‘Breathing in, I am aware of my mind. Breathing out, I am aware of my mind.’ He or she practices like this.
10. ‘Breathing in, I make my mind happy. Breathing out, I make my mind happy.’ He or she practices like this.
11. ‘Breathing in, I concentrate my mind. Breathing out, I concentrate my mind.’ He or she practices like this.
12. ‘Breathing in, I liberate my mind. Breathing out, I liberate my mind.’ He or she practices like this.
13. ‘Breathing in, I observe the impermanent nature of all dharmas. Breathing out, I observe the impermanent nature of all dharmas.’ He or she practices like this.
14. ‘Breathing in, I observe the disappearance of desire. Breathing out, I observe the disappearance of desire.’ He or she practices like this.
15. ‘Breathing in, I observe cessation. Breathing out, I observe cessation.’ He or she practices like this.

16. ‘Breathing in, I observe letting go. Breathing out, I observe letting go.’ He or she practices like this.

“The Full Awareness of Breathing, if developed and practiced continuously according to these instructions, will be rewarding and of great benefit.”

Anapanasati Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya, 118

THICH NHAT HANH and the Monks and Nuns of Plum Village, Plum Village Chanting and Recitation Book, Parallax Press, Berkeley, California, 2000, pp. 241-247.

Appendix 2: Excerpt from the Discourse on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness

Part I

I heard these words of the Buddha one time when he was living at Kammassadharma, a market town of the Kuru people. The Buddha addressed the bhikkhus, “O bhikkhus.”

And the bhikkhus replied, “Venerable Lord.”

The Buddha said, “Bhikkhus, there is a most wonderful way to help living beings realize purification, overcome directly grief and sorrow, end pain and anxiety, travel the right path, and realize nirvana. This way is the Four Establishments of Mindfulness.

“What are the Four Establishments?

1. “Bhikkhus, a practitioner remains established in the observation of the body in the body, diligent, with clear understanding, mindful, having abandoned every craving and every distaste for this life.

2. “He remains established in the observation of the feelings in the feelings, diligent, with clear understanding, mindful, having abandoned every craving and every distaste for this life.

3. “He remains established in the observation of the mind in the mind, diligent, with clear understanding, mindful, having abandoned every craving and every distaste for this life.

4. “He remains established in the observation of the objects of mind in the objects of mind, diligent, with clear understanding, mindful, having abandoned every craving and every distaste for this life.

Satipatthana Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya, 10

THICH NHAT HANH and the Monks and Nuns of Plum Village, Plum Village Chanting and Recitation Book, Parallax Press, Berkeley, California, 2000, pp. 248-255.

Appendix 3: Discourse on Knowing the Better Way to Live Alone

I heard these words of the Buddha one time when the Lord was staying at the monastery in the Jeta Grove, in the town of Shravasti. He called all the monks to him and instructed them, “Bhikkhus!” And the bhikkhus replied, “We are here.” The Blessed One taught, “I will teach you what is meant by ‘knowing the better way to live alone.’ I will begin with an outline of the teaching, and then I will give a detailed explanation.
Bhikkhus, please listen carefully.” “Blessed One, we are listening.” The Buddha taught:

“Do not pursue the past.

Do not lose yourself in the future. The past no longer is.

The future has not yet come. Looking deeply at life as it is
in the very here and now,
the practitioner dwells
in stability and freedom.

We must be diligent today.

To wait till tomorrow is too late.

Death comes unexpectedly. How can we bargain with it? The sage calls a person who knows how to dwell in mindfulness night and day
'the one who knows the better way to live alone.'

"Bhikkhus, what do we mean by 'pursuing the past'? When someone considers the way his body was in the past, the way his feelings were in the past, the way his perceptions were in the past, the way his mental formations were in the past, the way his consciousness was in the past; when he considers these things and his mind is burdened by and attached to these things which belong to the past, then that person is pursuing the past.

"Bhikkhus, what is meant by 'not pursuing the past'? When someone considers the way his body was in the past, the way his feelings were in the past, the way his perceptions were in the past, the way his mental formations were in the past, the way his consciousness was in the past; when he considers these things but his mind is neither enslaved by nor attached to these things which belong to the past, then that person is not pursuing the past.

"Bhikkhus, what is meant by 'losing yourself in the future'? When someone considers the way his body will be in the future, the way his feelings will be in the future, the way his perceptions will be in the future, the way his mental formations will be in the future, the way his consciousness will be in the future; when he considers these things and his mind is burdened by and daydreaming about these things which belong to the future, then that person is losing himself in the future.

"Bhikkhus, what is meant by 'not losing yourself in the future'? When someone considers the way his body will be in the future, the way his feelings will be in the future, the way his perceptions will be in the future, the way his mental formations will be in the future, the way his consciousness will be in the future; when he considers these things but his mind is not burdened by or daydreaming about these things which belong to the future, then he is not losing himself in the future.

"Bhikkhus, what is meant by 'being swept away by the present'? When someone does not study or learn anything about the Awakened One, or the teachings of love and understanding, or the community that lives in harmony and awareness; when that person knows nothing about the noble teachers and their teachings, and
does not practice these teachings, and thinks, 'This body is myself; I am this body. These feelings are myself; I am these feelings. This perception is myself; I am this perception. This mental formation is myself; I am this mental formation. This
consciousness is myself; I am this consciousness,' then that person is being swept away by the present.

"Bhikkhus, what is meant by 'not being swept away by the present'? When someone studies and learns about the Awakened One, the teachings of love and understanding, and the community that lives in harmony and awareness; when that person knows about noble teachers and their teachings, practices these teachings, and
does not think, 'This body is myself; I am this body. These feelings are myself; I am these feelings. This perception is myself; I am this perception. This mental formation is myself; I am this mental formation. This consciousness is myself; I am this
consciousness,' then that person is not being swept away by the present.

"Bhikkhus, I have presented the outline and the detailed eXplanation of knowing the better way to live alone."

Thus the Buddha taught, and the bhikkhus were delighted to put his teachings into practice.

Bhaddekaratta Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya, 131

THICH NHAT HANH and the Monks and Nuns of Plum Village, Plum Village Chanting and Recitation Book, Parallax Press, Berkeley, California, 2000, pp. 234-236.

Appendix 4: The Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings of the Order of Interbeing

The First Mindfulness Training: Openness

- Aware of the suffering created by fanaticism and intolerance, we are determined not to be idolatrous about or bound to any doctrine, theory, or ideology, even Buddhist ones. Buddhist teachings are guiding means to help us learn to look deeply and to develop our understanding and compassion. They are not doctrines to fight, kill, or die for.

The Second Mindfulness Training: Nonattachment to Views

- Aware of the suffering created by attachment to views and wrong perceptions, we are determined to avoid being narrow-minded and bound to present views. We shall learn and practice non-attachment from views in order to be open to others' insights and eXperiences. We are aware that the knowledge we presently possess is not changeless, absolute truth. Truth is found in life, and we will observe life within and around us in every moment, ready to learn throughout our lives.

The Third Mindfulness Training: Freedom of Thought

- Aware of the suffering brought about when we impose our views on others, we are committed not to force others, even our children, by any means whatsoever - such as authority, threat, money, propaganda, or indoctrination - to adopt our views. We will respect the right of others to be different and to choose what to believe and how to decide. We will, however, help others renounce fanaticism and narrowness through compassionate dialogue.

The Fourth Mindfulness Training: Awareness of Suffering

- Aware that looking deeply at the nature of suffering can help us develop compassion and find ways out of suffering, we are determined not to avoid or close our eyes before suffering. We are committed to finding ways, including personal contact, images, and sounds, to be with those who suffer, so we can understand their situation deeply and help them transform their suffering into compassion, peace, and joy.

The Fifth Mindfulness Training: Simple, Healthy Living

- Aware that true happiness is rooted in peace, solidity, freedom, and compassion, and not in wealth or fame, we are determined not to take as the aim of our life fame, profit, wealth, or sensual pleasure, nor to accumulate wealth while millions are hungry and dying. We are committed to living simply and sharing our time, energy, and material resources with those in need. We will practice mindful consuming, not using alcohol, drugs, or any other products that bring toxins into our own and the collective body and consciousness.

The Sixth Mindfulness Training: Dealing with Anger

- Aware that anger blocks communication and creates suffering, we are determined to take care of the energy of anger when it arises and to recognize and transform the seeds of anger that lie deep in our consciousness. When anger comes up, we are determined not to do or say anything, but to practice mindful breathing or mindful walking and acknowledge, embrace, and look deeply into our anger. We will learn to look with the eyes of compassion at those we think are the cause of our anger.

The Seventh Mindfulness Training: Dwelling Happily in the Present Moment

- Aware that life is available only in the present moment and that it is possible to live happily in the here and now, we are committed to training ourselves to live deeply each moment of daily life. We will try not to lose ourselves in dispersion or be carried away by regrets about the past, worries about the future, or craving, anger, or jealousy in the present. We will practice mindful breathing to come back to what is happening in the present moment. We are determined to learn the art of mindful living by touching the wondrous, refreshing, and healing elements that are inside and around us, and by nourishing seeds of joy, peace, love, and understanding in ourselves, thus facilitating the work of transformation and healing in our consciousness.

The Eighth Mindfulness Training: Community and Communication

- Aware that lack of communication always brings separation and suffering, we are committed to training ourselves in the practice of compassionate listening and loving speech. We will learn to listen deeply without judging or reacting and refrain from uttering words that can create discord or cause the community to break. We will make every effort to keep communications open and to reconcile and resolve all conflicts, however small.

The Ninth Mindfulness Training: Truthful and Loving Speech

- Aware that words can create suffering or happiness, we are committed to learning to speak truthfully and constructively, using only words that inspire hope and confidence. We are determined not to say untruthful things for the sake of personal interest or to impress people, nor to utter words that might cause division or hatred. We will not spread news that we do not know to be certain nor criticize or condemn things of which we are not sure. We will do our best to speak out about situations of injustice, even when doing so may threaten our safety.

The Tenth Mindfulness Training: Protecting the Sangha

- Aware that the essence and aim of a Sangha is the practice of understanding and compassion, we are determined not to use the Buddhist community for personal gain or profit or transform our community into a political instrument. A spiritual community should, however, take a clear stand against oppression and injustice and should strive to change the situation without engaging in partisan conflicts.

The Eleventh Mindfulness Training: Right Livelihood

- Aware that great violence and injustice have been done to our environment and society, we are committed not to live with a vocation that is harmful to humans and nature. We will do our best to select a livelihood that helps realize our ideal of understanding and compassion. Aware of global economic, political and social realities, we will behave responsibly as consumers and as citizens, not investing in companies that deprive others of their chance to live.

The Twelfth Mindfulness Training: Reverence for Life

- Aware that much suffering is caused by war and conflict, we are determined to cultivate nonviolence, understanding, and compassion in our daily lives, to promote peace education, mindful mediation, and reconciliation within families, communities, nations, and in the world. We are determined not to kill and not to let others kill. We will diligently practice deep looking with our Sangha to discover better ways to protect life and prevent war.

The Thirteenth Mindfulness Training: Generosity

- Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing, and oppression, we are committed to cultivating loving kindness and learning ways to work for the well-being of people, animals, plants, and minerals. We will practice generosity by sharing our time, energy, and material resources with those who are in need. We are determined not to steal and not to possess anything that should belong to others. We will respect the property of others, but will try to prevent others from profiting from human suffering or the suffering of other beings.

The Fourteenth Mindfulness Training: Right Conduct

(For lay members):

- Aware that sexual relations motivated by craving cannot dissipate the feeling of loneliness but will create more suffering, frustration, and isolation, we are determined not to engage in sexual relations without mutual understanding, love, and a long-term commitment. In sexual relations, we must be aware of future suffering that may be caused. We know that to preserve the happiness of ourselves and others, we must respect the rights and commitments of ourselves and others. We will do everything in our power to protect children from sexual abuse and to protect couples and families from being broken by sexual misconduct. We will treat our bodies with respect and preserve our vital energies (sexual, breath, spirit) for the realization of our bodhisattva ideal. We will be fully aware of the responsibility of bringing new lives into the world, and will meditate on the world into which we are bringing new beings.

(For monastic members):

- Aware that the aspiration of a monk or a nun can only be realized when he or she wholly leaves behind the bonds of worldly love, we are committed to practicing chastity and to helping others protect themselves. We are aware that loneliness and suffering cannot be alleviated by the coming together of two bodies in a sexual relationship, but by the practice of true understanding and compassion. We know that a sexual relationship will destroy our life as a monk or a nun, will prevent us from realizing our ideal of serving living beings, and will harm others. We are determined not to suppress or mistreat our body or to look upon our body as only an instrument, but to learn to handle our body with respect. We are determined to preserve vital energies (sexual, breath, spirit) for the realization of our bodhisattva ideal.

Appendix 5: The Five Mindfulness Trainings

The First Mindfulness Training

Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I am committed to cultivating compassion and learning ways to protect the lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals. I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to condone any act of killing in the world, in my thinking, and in my way of life.

The Second Mindfulness Training

Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing, and oppression, I am committed to cultivating loving kindness and learning ways to work for the well-being of people, animals, plants, and minerals. I will practice generosity by sharing my time, energy, and material resources with those who are in real need. I am determined not to steal and not to possess anything that should belong to others. I will respect the property of others, but I will prevent others from profiting from human suffering or the suffering of other species on Earth.

The Third Mindfulness Training

Aware of the suffering caused by sexual misconduct, I am committed to cultivating responsibility and learning ways to protect the safety and integrity of individuals, couples, families, and society. I am determined not to engage in sexual relations without love and a long-term commitment. To preserve the happiness of myself and others, I am determined to respect my commitments and the commitments of others. I will do everything in my power to protect children from sexual abuse and to prevent couples and families from being broken by sexual misconduct.

The Fourth Mindfulness Training

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others, I am committed to cultivating loving speech and deep listening in order to bring joy and happiness to others and relieve others of their suffering. Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I am determined to speak truthfully, with words that inspire self-confidence, joy, and hope. I will not spread news that I do not know to be certain and will not criticize or condemn things of which I am not sure. I will refrain from uttering words that can cause division or discord, or that can cause the family or the community to break. I am determined to make all efforts to reconcile and resolve all conflicts, however small.

The Fifth Mindfulness Training

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful consumption, I am committed to cultivating good health, both physical and mental, for myself, my family, and my society by practicing mindful eating, drinking, and consuming. I will ingest only items that preserve peace, well-being, and joy in my body, in my consciousness, and in the collective body and consciousness of my family and society. I am determined not to use alcohol or any other intoxicant or to ingest foods or other items that contain toxins, such as certain TV programs, magazines, books, films, and conversations. I am aware that to damage my body or my consciousness with these poisons is to betray my ancestors, my parents, my society, and future generations. I will work to transform violence, fear, anger, and confusion in myself and in society by practicing a diet for myself and for society. I understand that a proper diet is crucial for self-transformation and for the transformation of society.

Appendix 6: The UNESCO Manifesto 2000

Recognising my share of responsibility for the future of humanity, especially for today's children and those of future generations, I pledge - in my daily life, in my family, my work, my community, my country and my region - to:

1. **“Respect all life.”** Respect the life and dignity of each human being without discrimination and prejudice.

2. **“Reject violence.”** Practice active non-violence, rejecting violence in all its forms: physical, sexual, psychological, economical and social, in particular towards the most deprived and vulnerable such as children and adolescents.

3. **“Share with others.”** Share my time and material resources in a spirit of generosity to put an end to exclusion, injustice and political and economic oppression.

4. **“Listen to understand.”** Defend freedom of expression and cultural diversity, giving preference always to dialogue and listening without engaging in fanaticism, defamation and the rejection of others.

5. **“Preserve the planet.”** Promote consumer behaviour that is responsible and development practices that respect all forms of life and preserve the balance of nature on the planet.

6. **“Rediscover solidarity.”** Contribute to the development of my community, with the full participation of women and respect for democratic principles, in order to create together new forms of solidarity.

Appendix 7: Excerpt from the orientation booklet “How to Enjoy Your Stay in Plum Village”

Bells of Mindfulness

On your arrival you might hear a bell sound and suddenly people around you have stopped still, stopped talking, and stopped moving. It might be the telephone ringing or the clock chiming, or the monastery bell sounding. These are our bells of mindfulness. When we hear the sound of the bell we relax our body and become aware of our breathing. We do that naturally, with enjoyment, and without solemnity or stiffness.

When we hear one of these mindfulness bells ring, we stop all of our conversations and whatever we are doing and bring our awareness to our breathing. The ringing bell has called out to us:

Listen, listen,
this wonderful sound brings me back to my true home.

By stopping to breathe and restore our calm and our peace, we become free, our work becomes more enjoyable and the friend in front of us becomes more real. Back home we can use the ringing of our telephone, the local church bells, the cry of a baby, or even the sound of fire engines and ambulances as our bells of mindfulness. With just three conscious breaths we can release the tensions in our body and mind and return to a cool and clear state of being.

Beginning Anew

To begin anew is to look deeply and honestly at ourselves, our past actions, speech and thoughts and to create a fresh beginning within ourselves and in our relationships with others. At the practice center we practice Beginning Anew as a community every two weeks and individually as often as we like.

We practice Beginning Anew to clear our mind and keep our practice fresh. When a difficulty arises in our relationships with fellow practitioners and one of us feels resentment or hurt, we know it is time to Begin Anew. The following is a description of the four-part process of Beginning Anew as used in a formal setting. One person speaks at a time and is not interrupted during his or her turn. The other practitioners practice deep listening and following their breath.

1) Flower watering - This is a chance to share our appreciation for the other person. We may mention specific instances when the other person said or
did *something that we had admired. This is an opportunity to shine light on the other’s* strengths and contributions to the sangha and to encourage the growth of his or her positive qualities.
2) Sharing regrets - We may mention any unskillfulness in our actions, speech or thoughts that we have not yet had an opportunity to apologize for.
3) Expressing a hurt - We may share how we felt hurt by an interaction with another practitioner, due

to his or her actions, speech or thoughts. (To express
a *hurt we should first water the other person’s flower by sharing two positive qualities*

that we have trully observed in him or her. Expressing a hurt is often performed one on one with another practitioner rather than in the group setting. You may ask for a third party that you both trust and respect to be present, if desired.)
4) Sharing a long-term difficulty & asking for support- At times we each have difficulties and pain arise from our past that surface in the present. When we share an issue that we are dealing with we can let the people around us understand us better and offer the support that we really need.

The practice of Beginning Anew helps us develop our kind speech and compassionate listening. Begin Anew is a practice of recognition and appreciation of the positive elements within our Sangha. For instance, we may notice that our roommate is generous in sharing her insights, and another friend is caring towards plants. Recognizing others positive traits allows us to see our own good qualities as well.

Along with these good traits, we each have areas of weakness, such as talking
out of our anger or being caught in our misperceptions. When we practice “flower watering” we support the development of good qualities in each other and at the same time we help to ease the difficulties in the other person. As in a garden, when we
“water the flowers” of loving kindness and compassion in each other, we also take energy away from the weeds of anger, jealousy and misperception.

We can practice Beginning Anew every day by expressing our appreciation for our fellow practitioners and apologizing right away when we do or say something that hurts them. We can politely let others know when we have been hurt as well. The health and happiness of the whole community depends on the harmony, peace and joy that exist between every member in the sangha.

Touching the Earth

The practice of Touching the Earth is to return to the Earth, to our roots, to our ancestors, and to recognize that we are not alone but connected to a whole stream of spiritual and blood ancestors. We are their continuation and with them, will continue into the future generations. We touch the earth to let go of the idea that we are separate and to remind us that we are the Earth and part of Life.

When we touch the Earth we become small, with the humility and simplicity of a young child. When we touch the Earth we become great, like an ancient tree sending her roots deep into the earth, drinking from the source of all waters. When we touch the Earth, we breathe in all the strength and stability of the Earth, and breathe out our suffering- our feelings of anger, hatred, fear, inadequacy and grief.

Our hands join to form a lotus bud and we gently lower ourselves to the ground so that all four limbs and our forehead are resting comfortably on the floor. While we are Touching the Earth we turn our palms face up, showing our openness to the three jewels, the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. After one or two times practicing Touching the Earth (Three Touchings or Five Touchings), we can already release a lot of our suffering and feeling of alienation, and reconcile with our ancestors, parents, children, or friends.

Hugging Meditation

When we hug, our hearts connect and we know that we are not separate beings. Hugging with mindfulness and concentration can bring reconciliation, healing, understanding, and much happiness. The practice of mindful hugging has helped so many to reconcile with each other -- fathers with sons, mothers with daughters, friends with friends, and so many others.

We may practice hugging meditation with a friend, our daughter, our father, our partner or even with a tree. To practice, we first bow and recognize the presence of each other. Then we can enjoy three deep conscious breaths to bring ourselves fully there. We then may open your arms and begin hugging. Holding each other for three in-and-out breaths. With the first breath, we are aware that we are present in this very moment and we are happy. With the second breath, we are aware that the other is present in this moment and we are happy as well. With the third breath, we are aware that we are here together, right now on this earth, and we feel deep gratitude and happiness for our togetherness. We then may release the other person and bow to each other to show our thanks.

When we hug in such a way, the other person becomes real and alive. We do not need to wait until one of us is ready to depart for a trip, we may hug right now and receive the warmth and stability of our friend in the present moment. Hugging can be a deep practice of reconciliation.

Appendix 8: The Two Promises

The First Promise

I vow to develop understanding, in order to live peaceably with people, animals, plants, and minerals.

The Second Promise

I vow to develop my compassion, in order to protect the lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals.

Young students of the Enlightened One, understanding and love are the two most important teachings of the Buddha. If we do not make the effort to be open, to understand the suffering of other people, we will not be able to love them and to live in harmony with them. We should also try to understand and protect the lives of animals, plants, and minerals and live in harmony with them. If we cannot understand, we cannot love. The Buddha teaches us to look at living beings with the eyes of love and understanding. Please learn to practice this teaching.

Appendix 9: Seven – Point Suggestion of Zen Master Nhat Hanh About the Policy of the Government of Vietnam toward Buddhism

1. The government affirms its willingness to separate the political domain of the State from the religious domain of the Church. These two domains have different areas of services, and neither has the right to interfere with other's affairs. However, both Church and State have to have ethical values, if they do not want to be bankrupt. Therefore, religion can help politics and politics can help religion, and both have to abide by the laws. Religion can offer its insights and can remind politics about the spiritual dimension in both the Executive and the Legislative institutions. Politics can offer its constructive criticism to religions about the degeneration of moral values and abuse of religious authority to seek fame and power. Additionally, the government can support religious institutions in ethical education and practice of religious activities to bring about a healthy society.

In the past during the Lý Dynasty, King Lý Thái Tổ supported Buddhism by building temples and facilities for the Buddhist Congregation, and Zen master Vạn Hạnh advised the King in the economic, cultural, ethical and political arena. However, the King did not control Buddhism and the Zen master did not hold any position in politics.

From now on the Government guarantees that monastics will not be forced to become: members of the national assembly, members of provincial People Committees, members of the Vietnam Fatherland Front or members of any policies party. Monastics involved in politics in such manners trangresses their precepts, lessen the prestige of the Buddhist Sangha, and create an image that the government is using them to control religion.

From now on monastics will not receive medals from the government. Venerable monastics, who have been good advisors and have offered concrete methods which bring benefits to the country and the people, may only received purple Shanghais as token as gratitude.

2. Due to misunderstanding, fear, suspicion and unskillfulness, there have been many regrettable events in the Buddhist community in the last 50 years. These events created quite a few difficulties for both the government and the Buddhist community. To help reconcile existing difficulties, to heal the wounds, to rebuild brotherhood in the Buddhist community, and to establish good communication with the Government, the Government will invite venerable monks and nuns in the Buddhist Sangha to advise both the Executive and Legislative Institutions. Suggested venerable monastics are: (Most Venerable) Trí Quang, Trí Tịnh, Nhật Liên, Huyền Quang, Quảng Độ, Phổ Tuệ, v.v… The Government would like to listen deeply to the insights of venerable monks and nuns in major areas related to Buddhism. The advising monastics can meet for several weeks or several

months, at places of their choosing, in any part of the country. They should have ample time and space to contemplate so they can offer concrete suggestions and solutions. The government will not try to sway their thinking and decisions by any direct or indirect mean. The government would like the venerables monks and nuns to advise on the following aspects:

a. Concerning the Decrees relating to Religions, which points are appropriate that can be enhanced and which points are not appropriate that need to be revised. The Executive and Legislative Institutions should be informed so these points can be modified. If needed, involved executive and legislative offices will discuss with the advising venerables before modifying these points.

b. How to unify the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS) and the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) in brotherhood and how to put this unified organization out of the inteference of political power inside and outside of Vietnam? Please let the Government know about what to do (and what not to do) to support this unification? Two Buddhist Churches carrying on their activities within the law and not being affected by politics is a reality that can be accepted, if both Churches have the conditions to listen to each other's difficulties and aspirations. The government needs to listen to the difficulties in the Buddhist community and the Buddhist community needs to listen to the difficulties that the government is facing. There is nothing that we can not do if we are willing to sit down to talk honestly and directly with each other.

3. To deal with social ills such as crime, prostitution, drug, debauch, and corruption the government's current policy is to establish wards of culture. To accomplish this, the government calls for help from local residents and increases surveillance and punishment, but ruling by law is not enough to deal with these social ills at the root. Do the Buddhist Churches have concrete rule-by-ethic programs to help parents communicate with their children and spouses to communicate with each other, to re-establish happiness in the families so that youths do not have to burry their unhappiness in drug, drinking, debauch, gang, and crime. What can the neighbourhood's temple do to help build and re-establish ethic and trust in the community?

4. What can the two Buddhist Churches do to help stop the abuse of power within the Buddhist community and in the government, besides public appeal and denouncement? Corruption and power struggle exist not only in political parties, in politics but also in religious institutions. Do venerable monks and nuns have concrete methods to stop the deterioration: of student monks and nuns, of monastics whose only aspirations are to seek and consolidate fame and power, and of members of administrative systems in all levels? In the work of protecting Buddhism, of preventing corruptive members of the Buddhist community who are not abiding the precepts and are manipulating the Buddhist community for their own benefits, the government needs insights of venerable monks and nuns, and vice versa.

5. The government will order responsible agencies to support the monastics by granting permanent residency to those who would like to join a temple or a monastery to practice, bypassing the 3-month temporary residency requirement. The 3-monh temporary residency created bribery and extortion in both religious and government agencies. The government pledges from now on, the maximum time for issuing passports for monastics is 21 days, like that for other Vietnamese citizens, not six months to two years like before.

6. The trip to Vietnam to visit and to share the practice of Zen Master Nhất Hạnh and the International Buddhist Delegation of Plum Village has not ended, but it has brought about reconciliation, therapy, nourishment, and happiness to Buddhist from the South, Central and North Viet Nam; it has helped mend many broken relationships and helped build brotherhood. Many lay and monastics living in Thua Thien, in Vietnam and abroad, , were very happy about the being together again of all the monks from Thua Thien on 22.2.2005 at Tu Hieu temple, to recite the Bihkshu precepts, after 13 years of reciting separately. The conferences given at: National Administrative Institute in Ho Chi Minh, at Ho Chi Minh National Political Institute in Ha Noi, at Committee for Vietnamese Living Abroad in Ha Noi, the talks given at monastics retreats for 1200 monks and nuns in Hoang Phap Temple in Ho Chi Minh and for 900 monks and nuns at Tu Hieu Temple in Hue, helped remove many wrong perceptions, suspicion, and fear. The government also wants to see Most Venerable Huyen Quang and Quang Do have the chances to teach like those of Zen Master Nhat Hanh. The government ensures that the venerables can travel, can teach in all parts of the country and will find ways to support them. The Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam is a reality. It is not difficult to have this church operated again. The difficulty is that we need to sit down together, to talk, to re-establish

communication, to listen to each other, to be aware of
other's difficulties, and to make decisions that satisfy both sides.

The government has Government Committee for Religious Affairs to support religions; the Buddhist community has Buddhist Committee for Governmental Relations to support the government. Government Committee for Religious Affairs does not control and direct religions. It observes and suggests to religious officials about corruptions that can take place in religious domain and to be informed about what the government can do to safeguard religious facilities and to support religious institutions in the work of building wholesome society. Buddhist Committee for Governmental Relation does not: participate in governmental activities, request favours from the government, or control the government. It observes and advises the government for ways to eliminate abuse, injustice, corruption which brings damages to the government, to the country and to Buddhism.

佛教對二十一世紀的回應 西方弘法經驗談

佛教對二十一世紀的回應

西方弘法經驗談

釋真法印法師

註：2006 年 4 月，梅村四位法師（釋真法印法師等）代表一行禪師到中國參加世界佛教論壇，法印法師在論壇發表演講，介紹了梅村修持的傳承及一行禪師更新佛法的路程。

引子

佛教在這個新世紀、新千禧年代生機蓬勃。在過去百多二百年，佛教的種子已於西方國家播下，並且茁壯成長，根深葉茂。佛教最初流傳到西方時，只偏重知識和概念層面，但現在佛法已經在日常生活中扎根。過去三十年來，一行禪師及梅村僧眾致力實踐佛教義理，讓佛法滲進不同的領域。我們的行持是建基於《安般守意經》、《四念處經》、《勝妙獨處經》及以大乘為根的禪宗法要。也就是說，我們主力弘揚並實踐三大傳承的教法：包括上述經典所載的原始佛教要義、大乘佛教要義，以及能夠融入日常生活的禪宗法要。我們一直向社會各階層弘傳這些教法，教導大家如何修習佛法，不論是個人、家庭又或團體，都是我們弘法的對象。我們的努力已經見效，現在有機會跟其他傳承的師兄師姐分享經驗，實在十分高興。同時，我們希望其他傳承的朋友能為我們引燈指路，傳授弘法心得，讓我們精益求精。倘若大家認為我們的方法可取，歡迎取之應用在不同的新領域裡。

一行禪師教導之修行法門：《安般守意經》、《四念處經》和《勝妙獨處經》

一行禪師在西方弘法，是以《安般守意經》（**Anapanasati Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya** 118）為基礎的。師父出家幾年後，發現《安般守意經》開示了佛陀的教導，感到非常高興。此經教導我們如何覺照自己的存在，覺觀身受心法的微妙變化，藉此深入體會生命的實相，不再受困於恐懼、嗔怒和貪愛等痛苦。師父發現這部經典時，猶如找到金礦一樣，感到自己是世上最快樂的人；師父持之以恆修習此經已六十多年，深深體會到《安般守意經》是禪修教法的精華，經文開示了一套可靠易行的修行法門，任何人，甚至是小孩都能藉以感受到禪修的奧妙。

《安般守意經》有四組觀照當下身受心法的方法，四組方法大同小異，各有四種練習，引導我們察覺身心的剎那變化。首先，我們要學習對境覺察，逐漸培養出禪定，最終邁向解脫。 就以第一組覺觀身體的練習為例，佛陀首先教導我們觀呼吸。呼吸是身和心的橋樑，當我們覺觀到呼吸時，我們的身心就開始融和。練習數分鐘後，身體和心念會統一起來。如此繼續保持這種覺觀，我們便能放鬆身體，讓身體得到休息，從壓力、緊張中回復過來，從而治癒一切身心困苦。梅村以這套教法作基礎，發展了深度放鬆練習及身體掃描練習，讓大家覺觀身體的每一個部份，並以正念去擁抱身體的每一個部分，使身體釋放緊張，身心都得以復元。

同樣的方法可應用到心所的轉化上去。我們開始去覺觀心所，無論生起甚麼念頭，都以正念去擁抱它、平伏它，把它轉化濾淨。久而久之，心便徹底平靜安住，達至禪定的境界。只要心專注、不散亂，便能得解脫，不再受妄念束縛，完全自由自在。

感受當下美妙時刻

佛陀在《安般守意經》的開示很簡潔，只有四組練習，要是能明瞭並體會箇中旨趣，便可發展出其他不同的修練法門。這些修練法門不是僵化呆板的，而是能自然而然地融入日常生活當中。師父和先輩大德寫下了許多偈誦，幫助我們在日常生活中修習正念。這些琅琅上口又實用的偈誦，都是源於《安般守意經》，例如「吸氣，呼氣。深深的，紓緩的。平和的，暢快的。微笑，放鬆。活在當下，美妙時刻。」這偈子能幫助我們覺觀出入息，令我們專注。我們告訴自己：「吸氣，我知道我在吸氣。」接著說：「呼氣，我知道我在呼氣。」

我們亦可縮短句子，只說：「吸氣，呼氣。」如是修習後，身心自然而然地進入較深沉、較緩慢的呼吸。深沉、緩慢的呼吸是心能安頓、平伏和鬆弛的反照，習禪能令我們平靜和心輕自在，只要繼續修習，收穫自然更大。「吸氣，微笑。呼氣，放鬆。」我們可以停下來，覺受心境已經變得清明，也感受到生命的美妙。時常修習「吸氣，活在當下；呼氣，美妙此刻。」我們就可看到生命的實相。在梅村，我們會唱正念歌曲來幫助我們記憶偈誦，並將之一一應用到日常生活當中。

現在請大家閉上雙眼，正身端坐，放鬆下來，感覺舒服就可以了，請大家跟我們一起修習。

在生活中得解脫

《四念處經》（**Satipatthana sutta, Majjhima Nikaya** 10）和《安般守意經》相輔相成，能夠幫助我們實實在在的活在當下，對當下的一切了了分明。《四念處經》引導我們進一步觀修身受心法，讓我們了解能觀和所觀同屬一體，繼而明白到唯識學派的教導，令我們對無我、無常、涅槃三法印有更深刻的理解。當我們明瞭這些法義，同時時刻應用於日常生活中，我們便有機會證得究竟的解脫。

《安般守意經》和《四念處經》的禪修練習尤其適合初學者掌握坐禪或行禪的要領，我們編寫了一本禪修導引手冊，名為 《正念的蓮花 》（**The Blooming of a Lotus**），詳載三十四種禪修練習，並附有相關經文的注解。

在我們傳承中，另一本同樣重要的經典是《勝妙獨處經》（**Bhaddekaratta Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya** 131）。佛陀在經中教導我們完全活在當下──生命只在當下。過去已逝，將來未現。從這部經典我們看到原始佛教和臨濟禪宗乃一脈相承。抓不住當下，就抓不住生命──佛陀在其他經典裡也開示過這個教法，例如在《優婆塞經》（**Upasaka Sutra, Madhyama Agama 128**）中，佛陀提到現法樂住 （**drstadharmasukhavihari**）至少五次。這教法在我們傳承中佔有重要地位，同時亦是梅村之宗旨。

大乘要義

在梅村，我們的修習是身心合一的，不會將身體排除於心之外。**身體的平靜和轉化會帶動心的平靜和轉化，而心的平靜和轉化又能帶動身體的平靜和轉化**。我們對《安般守意經》的理解和應用，其實是依據大乘佛教身心合一的教法。痛苦與解脫是一體的，他們互即互入，互相依存。沒有痛苦，便不可能有轉化；痛苦是轉化的基礎。解脫是對痛苦的本質與根源有深刻理解的過程。梅村弘揚的教法是，痛苦只能

轉化，不能消失斷滅，只有把壞的轉化成好的；美好的結果乃建基在壞因緣上，沒有壞的，則不可能有好的。過去，人們以為只有終止痛苦，徹底地消除痛苦，才有自由。然而，縱使此刻生命中痛苦仍在，我們還是可以獲得喜悅和快樂的。

沒有船，一塊細小的卵石立刻就沉到水底；但若有船隻承載的話，就算是數以噸計的石頭也不會下沉。快樂是可能的，縱使我們身心仍有痛苦的卵石。梅村修行的另一特色是以僧團為重心。僧團就像一條船，如果我們讓僧團帶領，就算我們身心有苦，我們也不會意志消沉。轉化是一個過程，時刻都在進行著。完全獨立自足的涅槃是不存在的，涅槃是能夠看透自然實相的狀態。縱使阿賴耶識中仍存在痛苦，我們的心仍可感到自在，因此，唯識法是我們習禪的基礎，可以令我們明白轉苦為樂這個過程。

踐行大乘佛法的同時，梅村更強調融入社會。在越戰時，師父把佛教「帶上街頭」。當世上充滿痛苦時，佛陀不能再留守寺廟內，他必須走到街上幫助受苦的人。為此，師父創立了一個新的組織──相即共修團（The Order of Interbeing），把正念修習（戒律）應用到戰爭生活境況中，後來更將之廣泛地應用到社會層面上，特別是社會服務這一範疇。相即共修團以實踐大乘佛教的菩薩願行為宗旨（見「十四項正念修習」），所以成員都努力修習五項正念修習（即守持五戒），這麼做不但貫徹相即共修團的理念，同時也為社會大眾建立道德規範。

梅村把五戒重新演繹五項正念修習，目的是讓大眾易於接受和明白，好能在日常生活中應用出來。譬如第五項正念修習是指正念消費，其牽涉面廣闊，包括為保護心靈健康，我們須小心選擇書本、雜誌和電視節目；為保持身體健康，我們要避免飲酒和服食毒品。

聯合國教育科學及文化組織（UNESCO）採納了五項正念修習，寫成宣言向全世界發表。這份名為「2000 年聯合國教科文組織宣言」（UNESCO Manifesto 2000）的文件，當中只對五項正念修習作了輕微的修改；至 2006 年 2 月 21 日為止，宣言已有 75,847,655（接近七千六百萬）位來自世界各地的人士署名支持。

梅村法印

一行禪師是臨濟禪師第四十二代的傳人，我們是一行禪師的徒弟，便是臨濟禪師的第四十三代傳人了。臨濟禪師的第三十五代傳人了觀（Lieu Quan）禪師，在越南發展了新的法系，這樣算來，師父又屬於新法系的第八代傳人，我們則是第九代。越南大多數出家人均屬了觀（Lieu Quan）禪師這個法系。

在梅村，我們的行持有很多禪宗的元素。**我們特別強調日常生活中的修習，以獲得正念、定力和洞察作為解脫之道。**我們的傳承植根於臨濟禪師的教導，尤以他倡導的「地行神通」為本。師父和梅村僧人一直奉行臨濟禪師的教導，將之視為新的法印，但它又是佛陀所教導的「安住於當下」的延續。梅村所有的教導都帶著這個法印的標記，強調「我已到了，已到家了」。

這個法印告訴我們，**就在此時此地，就在當下，我們已能觸到涅槃、踏足淨土**，無須到遙遠的時空去尋覓。淨土是每天二十四小時皆可得，問題反倒是：我們是否有空間給淨土？我們相信：「苦難無可避免，但內心是否痛苦則是可以選擇的。」

這種理解對社會大眾的行動很有幫助。日常生活中，人們會碰上很多困難，但是一旦返回內在的修持，覺觀呼吸，便能進入清新、幽涼的涅槃境界。涅槃給人足夠的空間，讓折磨身心的火焰冷卻、熄滅。一旦我們回歸自己的呼吸，當下一刻便已深入了涅槃。

我們本著菩薩的慈心，為轉化社會而努力，但實際上，我們並不希望踏足一個沒有痛苦的地方。痛苦必須存在，它是原材料，是菩薩施行轉化的對象。沒有痛苦，就沒有淨土。梅村對淨土作了新的定義：**哪裡有了解和慈悲，哪裡就有淨土。**本著禪宗這種參透苦樂的洞見，我們鼓勵大家在日常生活的每一刻，進行修持，不要間斷。無論是坐著、站著、睡著、或身處任何活動，淨土都觸手可及。當我們覺察地修習行禪、坐禪，靜聽佛鐘的起落，或配合不同活動，默念合適的偈誦，我們便接觸到淨土。梅村提出了「手提淨土」的概念，就像我們有手提電話一樣；而既然有即沖的咖啡，也就有即達的淨土。無論到那裡，我們都能找到淨土，就在一瞬間！

我們修習思行合一時，皆以平穩、清明和慈悲為依歸。這樣，我們的言行都會是正確的言行。我們有的在興建佛寺，有的在照顧傷病，有的要開創事業，但不管俗務多繁忙、壓力多沉重，我們都不會失去穩固、清明與慈悲。

建立寺院團體

梅村相信，要使佛教在西方國家扎根，必須要有一個非常強大的寺院團體作後盾。但是，西方的佛教並不著重建立寺院團體，乃因西方的出家文化低落之故。在西方，無論是信奉基督教或其他宗教的，大都未把寺院團體視作心靈庇護之所。因此，佛教最初傳入西方，是由在家眾而非出家眾達成的。梅村相信，要使俗家佛教有長足的發展，必須要有寺院文化並存，作為修練行持的中心，和佛教進入社會的基石。

僧團是一個整體

過去三十年，我們把寺院團體建基於**手足之情**之上。一行禪師觀察所得，寺院團體若不是建構如一個家庭，是沒辦法維持得長久的。我們回顧歷史，會發現亞洲大多數的寺院團體都建構得像一個血緣家庭，年長的僧人儼如父親，年長的女尼就如母親，膝下有共修的兄姐弟妹，女兒和兒子。

我們的寺院並不修習太多的禮拜，也不鼓吹在家眾祈求佛陀以解決問題。我們致力增進理解、修習智慧，**禪修和社會服務**是我們寺院生活的精髓。我們的修習仍有宗教的內涵，但所佔比例很少。我們不舉行太多的儀式。日常生活中，我們有很多的禪修—坐禪、行禪、遊戲禪和工作禪等。所有生命層面都被視為禪修，當中我們學習停頓和深觀。

二十年來，我們盡了最大的努力，希望把傳誦了兩千多年的《**戒本**》修訂，使其切合今日社會的需要。我們在 2003 年的韓國之旅中，發表了《戒本》修訂版的初稿，以幫助出家人在現代社會中修習。我們得到很多不同承傳的出家人提供意見，及後，便出版了《戒本》修訂版的定稿。大家可在梅村的網址 www.plumvillage.org 中找到這本書。我們根據法藏部（Dharmagupta school）的傳承，保存了傳統《戒本》的結構，但重寫了其中很多條戒條，希望出家人面對二十一世紀的挑戰時，此部經書會為其提供護庇。例如，我們加入了新的條文，教導出家人如何技巧地駕駛車輛，適當地運用手提電話、互聯網、電郵等等。

我們的僧團裡，資深的僧人備受尊敬，但同時，我們亦將彼此間的階級成分減至最低；為此，我們採用民主的羯磨作法程序（**Sanghakarman** Procedure），由集體決定僧團內各種事務。這方法其實更貼近原始僧團的傳統。住院的主持負責照料整個僧團成員的靈性生活，不會消耗精神於行政工作上。僧團內劃分了不同的委員會：日常事務委員會（care-taking council）負責僧團的日常運作，由較年輕的成員組成；佛法導師委員會（dharma teacher council）負責帶領團體中的修行事務；比丘或比丘尼委員

會（bhikshu or bhikshuni council）負責對所有事務作最後決定，這些受具足戒的僧人，是僧團最重要的管治單位。

在我們的大家庭裡，僧團是一個整體，整個僧團一同轉化。我們並不強調個別僧尼的功業或進境，僧團生活最重要的，是能培養出真摯的手足之情。一行禪師說過，他為僧六十多年來，沒有見過一個比手足之情更高尚的原則或理念；名聲也好，任何形式的功業也好，都不值得為之而捐棄手足之情。

佛法導師需求大

我們便是以這種精神，來修習**光照**（shining light）的。光照是一個非常誠懇的分享過程，每一位成員會獲得團體所有的成員的指點，了解自己在修行上的優點和缺點。每年的冬季，我們都有三個月雨季安居禪修。傳統的光照是在雨季安居禪修結束時，在自恣儀式（Pavarana ceremony）中舉行，當中只是一對一的給予對方意見。在梅村，每一位成員都會得到其他成員的光照，所以需要花一定的時間來完成整個過程。之後，在自恣儀式中，會宣讀一封光照信，總結整個僧團在過程中分享的洞察。我們以整個僧團之慧眼，光照出深邃的智慧；接受這種智慧，是十分深入的修習。在佛教的傳統，有佛眼和法眼之說，但沒有僧團眼之說。梅村卻發現僧團眼，讓它發揮作用，僧團眼包含了佛眼和法眼。

目前，各寺院內**佛法導師**的人數，並不足以應付現代社會所需，我們因此致力訓練寺院佛法導師和俗家佛法導師。過去二十年來，我們為近二百位出家和俗家的佛法導師傳了慧燈。訓練的目的，不是要準備導師帶領各種佛教的儀式，而是要幫助導師徹悟佛法、深入修行，讓他們有能力幫助眾生，轉化眾生的痛苦。在很多國家，都有我們的俗家佛法導師，現在，全球各地大約有七百個當地僧團，但大部分的僧團都沒有佛法導師帶領，可見世界各地對佛法導師的需求有多大。

服務社會：農村發展和善終服務

我們參加各項農村發展計劃時學會了一個原則，那就是不能把城市的知識，強加於農民身上。即使我們是工程師或醫生，都需要細心觀察、深入聆聽，看農民怎樣才能幫自己痊癒、把農村搞好。然後，我們會配合當地的情況，調整我們既有的知識和經驗，務求在村民既有的基礎上，提供合適的建議。我們的宗旨，是助人自助，不是只向農民擲錢，說：「來，拿這些錢去建個醫療中心吧。」我們來到農村是要學習當地農民的優點，以這些優點為發展的基礎。我們要問：「如何可以善用村內一眾長老和專家的知識，幫助村民建立自己的學校和診所？」如果村民在某方面遇到障礙，我們便向村民提出建議，讓他們討論。當村民說需要錢時，我們會問：「我們能就地取材，在村內找到所需的物資嗎？就建一間竹棚學校如何？」我們要將財政資助放到最後，這樣，村民會感到這是自己的計劃而加以珍惜。這才是專家與本土居民間真正的合作。

我們無論是自己進行善終服務，或指導別人提供善終服務，都不鼓勵向臨終者說，他們將要到甚麼淨土，反而是提醒他們，走過的一生有何美妙之處。佛陀說，我們離開此身時，會把諸行的果報帶走。如果臨終者還能夠說話，我們便請臨終者告訴我們，一生中最美好的事情是甚麼。我們能為臨終者灌溉美好種子，讓他們離開此生時帶走。我們跟臨終者一起重歷過去的美好時光，例如拯救另一個生命的經驗。我們又跟臨終者說，他們在生命中曾彰顯的才能此刻並沒有失去；在他們的兒女當中，這才能已經以另一種形式呈現了。這樣，臨終者便明白，自己不用死後才能重生；也就是這樣，很多人都能夠平和、輕安地死去。

把修習和淨土帶給所有人

在過去三十年，梅村舉辦了很多個禪營，把這個「手提淨土」帶到社會每一角落。我們的基礎來自原始佛教的靜修法門、大乘佛教普度眾生的宏願，以及禪宗具體明確的修習方法。我們正在編著一本有關佛教入世工作的新書，內容概要如下。

夏令禪營及其他經常性禪營

梅村每年都舉辦一個為期四個星期的夏令禪營，吸引到來自四十多個國家的男女老少、夫婦或大小家庭與我們一同習禪。我們要求參加者最少留在梅村一星期，好讓他們可以眞正停止平常俗務，完全平靜下來，這樣才有可能轉化。每星期，師父與不同的佛法導師合作，二人隔天輪流開示，並輪流以英語、法語或越南語開示，夏令禪營更提供德語、荷蘭語、意大利語、西班牙語及葡萄牙語即時傳譯。我們教導參加者坐禪、聆聽鐘聲、行禪、觀呼吸、徹底放鬆休息、接觸大地（即五頂禮）、聆聽開示、灌溉正面種子、覺察及轉化負面習氣、與愛人慈愛溝通並修習「重新開始」的練習，技巧地讓對方明白彼此間的問題，此外，參加者還會學習停下來，作深入覺察練習。

在梅村修習，其中一個重點是開示時互相討論，在家眾會組成小組，向僧眾分享樂事和困難。經驗告訴我們，僧眾參與其中、全心全意聆聽各人分享內心世界，能夠為參加禪營的朋友帶來很大的治療和很深的轉化。每星期我們都有一個節日，讓大家表達自己所想所感，享受當下，覺察自己和他人身上的快樂種子，好好的培養這些種子成長。

大部份初次參加禪營的朋友都會要求參加正式的五項正念修習傳授儀式，他們還承諾回家後會繼續修習，我們會鼓勵禪修者定期相聚，一起念誦戒律，好能持之以恆。很多人心內的菩薩種子因此而開花，他們主動參加僧團活動，又或自組新的僧團繼續修習。

在梅村，我們讓在家眾多接觸僧眾，並從他們身上學習。我們沒有僱用任何人為我們幹活，所有比丘、比丘尼和在家眾會分成工作小組，令禪營順利運作。與僧眾一起工作，一起修習行禪、工作禪，深入聆聽，慈心說話，在家眾就在不知不覺間、自然而然地接受了佛法的灌溉。僧侶亦會為有特別需要的在家眾作個別指導，協助他們面對生活中的困難時刻，例如離婚、家庭衝突、身體受虐、受性騷擾、親友去世、過度悲傷，又或嚴重抑鬱。

梅村上下均認為佛法簡明易懂，即使**小孩子**也會明白。今年夏令禪營，師父每次開示都先花二十分鐘介紹適合小孩修習的法門，師父柔聲開示，用簡單明了的說話，孩童都能聽懂。小孩子全坐在禪堂的最前排，好讓師父容易看到他們的直接反應，從而作最合適的開示。我們看到孩子較成人更能自然地接受佛法，成年人通常受自己的知識和生活經驗影響，一時間無法完全接受佛陀的教導。

開示後我們透過不同活動與孩子分享如何實踐早上的教導。我們會鼓勵小孩子培養包容的心、建立手足的情誼。我們挑選一班已在梅村修習數年的孩子為核心小組，讓他們以大哥哥大姐姐身分幫助帶領小弟弟小妹妹。這樣安排可令小孩之間的關係更密切，讓他們看到別人的長處和才能。每個孩子都有機會表達自己，其他人會細心聆聽，西方國家很多孩子無法融入社會，在梅村，他們可以重拾這種歸屬感。向小孩開示的時候，我們多採用說故事、玩遊戲的方式，好讓他們更容易掌握修習精要。

我們常向孩子介紹一種非常有效的修習──**卵石禪**。我們和小孩一起去散步，每個小孩要尋找四顆美麗的卵石。這四顆卵石代表了花朵、山、水和空間。每一種元素象徵一種禪坐特質，坐禪因而變得生動有

趣。禪修時，我們好像花一般清新，好像高山屹立不移，好像水映照着事物的本性，我們感到心靈深處空間滿溢，經驗着禪修中的自由自在。

我們也會教授孩子「**兩種承諾**」，培養他們的慈悲心，令他們學會體諒他人、其他動植物，甚或礦石，不再予以傷害。在成年人接受五項正念修習的那個星期初，小孩子會在父母、朋友及僧團面前正式皈依三寶及受持「兩種承諾」。

唱歌的修習是我們團體中既重要又開心的一環，孩子很容易把歌唱帶進修習中，透過歌曲，大家一起吸氣、呼氣，想像自己是一朵花，一座山和一池水等等。

我們嘗試製造機會讓爸爸媽媽和孩子一起修習，這樣可以播下種子，讓他們回到家中繼續共修。敲磬請聲、聆聽磬聲、行禪、禪食、重新開始（灌溉心田的花朵）等修習能令家庭更和諧，彼此更信任。事實上，家長多加參與是很重要的。

孩子到達梅村的第一個星期，尤其是第一次到梅村的孩子，發現身處一個沒有電視、沒有遊戲機的地方，通常會很驚訝和失望。但過了一個星期，大部分孩子都不想離開梅村，並希望可以再回來。回家後，他們還會幫助爸媽重拾禪修，例如家庭遇到困難或緊張時刻，他們便會請磬聲。

我們鼓勵**青少年**來梅村前及到達梅村後反思一下他們來梅村的目的，梅村有什麼東西與他們的生活或修行有關連和有意義。我們盡力令他們感到舒適自在，例如安排他們住在一個大房間，為他們設立特別營地。我們邀請他們參與僧團的工作，晚飯後他們組成小組，為小樹木灌木及花朵澆水。這工作有助建立手足情、責任感和團結力量，讓他們感到彼此好像一家人一樣，各人都關愛這一個家。在我們與青少年接觸中，我們留意到他們很渴望肩負責任和得到別人信任。青年人很開心能參與小組的決定，例如他們喜歡一起決定禪營的時間表。

每天早上第一節的開示結束後，青少年便會組成一組玩遊戲，分享開示的內容，或行禪。下午和傍晚，各人回到自己所屬的小組。我們會一起做手工藝、唱歌或在大自然中漫步，我們努力培養覺察力，增添快樂。周末時，藝術活動特別合適，我們鼓勵青年人透過手工藝品去表達他們在梅村所得的經驗和感受。我們邀請對美術、 戲劇、舞蹈、音樂有經驗的成年禪修者到來，跟青少年分享他們的才藝。我們也會分享實用的修習方法，令青少年和父母建立良好關係，改善大家相處之道。

以下是一些我們與青少年分享的活動：

我們預留一間茅屋給青少年，讓他們自由布置茅屋。我們會一起外出散步，撿一些東西；回到茅屋後，我們圍圈坐下，然後分享我們從大自然帶回來的東西給我們的意義。我們邀請各人向大地慈母所送的禮物發一個願或祈禱，可以在心中默念、講出來或寫在紙上。然後我們把這神聖的禮物放在一張放滿鮮花、水果、洋燭和香燭的桌上，猶如聖壇一般。

「佛法戲劇」：以戲劇形式演出我們在開示時聽到的教法，或在小組分享的內容，題材可包括溝通問題，細意聆聽，慈心說話等。我們把提議寫在紙上，然後放進籃子。每人從籃子內抽取一個題目，然後分組，每組最少三人，大家合演一個短劇。

青少年一塊兒到附近的湖閒遊是賞心樂事。他們可以互相認識，也可以與僧眾多接觸，大家一起玩耍，然後坐下來分享，他們的分享往往很深入、真摯。一星期快要完結時，也是最適合修習「重新開始」中「灌溉心田的花朵」的時間。

「種子青少年」一直是我們的好助手，他們在修習上已很鞏固，希望像工作人員般參與活動。他們不單是梅村僧團和各地年輕人的重要橋樑，而且在小組中能促進組員的溝通。由於他們本身是年輕人，又是禪修者，他們就好像膠水一樣，連繫着各禪友。

語言不通是小組最大的障礙挑戰。說相同語言的青少年很自然走在一組，但不代表不同組別就沒有交流機會。故此，安排全體參與的活動時間尤為重要，例如討論時間和用膳時間，大家可以互相認識。翻譯服務也是必須的，因為這有助組員之間的連繫。

除了大型的夏令禪營外，梅村全年都開放給在家眾到來共修。我們每兩年舉辦一次為期廿一天的禪營，師父每天會以英語開示，深入討論某一個修習法門，經驗豐富的禪修者、佛法老師及相即共修團的成員都愛參加這類禪修。今年六月，師父與僧團會舉辦廿一天的禪營，主題是「佛陀的呼吸」。

在世界各地弘法

一行禪師及其僧團經常在美國及其他國家帶領禪營，包括澳大利亞、比利時、巴西、加拿大、中國、捷克、丹麥、英國、德國、荷蘭、香港、印度、愛爾蘭、以色列、意大利、日本、韓國、澳門、挪威、波蘭、蘇聯、蘇格蘭、瑞典、瑞士、台灣、泰國及越南。我們帶領的禪營通常是五至七天，參加人數有四百至一千二百人，而公開講座的參加人數則由一千人至一萬人不等。在禪營結束前，我們通常有五項正念修習的受戒儀式；每一夏季禪營有數百名新禪修者，他們都會正式接受五項正念修習，並且加入一個共修團或組成新的共修團，以便回到家鄉後可繼續修習。

特別安排的禪營

在 1985 年，師父第一次為特定組別舉辦禪營，這次的參加者全是環保人士。

師父開示《金剛經》的要義，我們當捨棄四種執取：別執取自我為實有；別執取人比其他生物高等；別執取生物的概念，別執取壽命的概念。師父開示，人並不比樹木、植物及礦物高等，因此我們應和它們融洽共處。師父更指出《金剛經》乃最早的環保宣言。

第二個特別安排的禪營是在 1987 年為**藝術家**而設。參加者包括音樂家、雕塑家、畫家、作家等。師父深信藝術是非常奏效的溝通方法，比語言更有力傳達訊息。他教導藝術家們要學習停下來，放鬆休息及深入觀察，才可有負責任的藝術創作。藝術可以很有建設性，也可以具破壞力，例如一件可怕的事情發生了，藝術家可以創作出啟發大眾去作改變的作品，讓大家為事情負上責任。師父還開示了《子肉經》（**Samyukta Agama 373**）的教法，並認為經中開示對廿一世紀非常重要。在 2003 年，在一個專為荷里活電影業人士而舉辦的禪營中，師父也討論了這些主題。

約在 1987 年，師父開辦**兒童**禪營。參加者共一百人，我們還送上機票邀請了多名懂禪修的「種子孩子」來協助其他孩子習禪。當然，我們也歡迎父母一起到來，他們可以和孩子一起學習如何共修。禪營完結時，大家練習擁抱禪，很多孩子都問爸媽為甚麼這麼快就要離開禪營呢。

1989 年的禪營是為**推動和平的積極分子**而設。師父教導大家如何給總統和法律制訂者寫「情信」，而不是向他們呼喝。事實上，我們積極表達意見時，也能體現出和平與慈悲，如此，我們才能觸動他人心中的和平與慈悲，不會激發對方的憤怒。

師父一生以締造和平、宣揚人權為業；我們也努力不懈，為世界謀求公義。師父說，想改變一個人，先要和這個人交朋友；如果別人把你當作敵人，即使你位高權重，別人也是迫不得已才來順從你，但始終會想盡辦法避開你。

談到推動和平與人權的工作，我們有很多經驗可和大家分享，在這次研討會，我們無法一一盡述，希望大家將來有機會，讀一讀我們這方面的書籍，例如一行禪師的《愛就要行動》（**Love in Action**），還有釋真空法師的《真愛的功課》（**Learning True Love**）。

翌年，我們帶領了一個**跨宗教**的禪營，參加者包括猶太教、基督教、天主教、佛教等多個宗教的修行者。我們一起慶祝逾越節和復活節，遵從基督教的傳統，享用復活蛋，奉行領聖體、洗腳禮等儀式。我們強調，大家不必多費唇舌，告訴對方某某傳統如何美妙，倒不如一起實行各個傳統，親嘗箇中美妙。奉行天主教和猶太教的聖祭時，我們用葡萄汁代替葡萄酒。

師父及僧團也為**心理治療師**舉辦了禪營。頭四天，大家必須完全禁語。有參加者一心以為禪營跟一般的專業會議大同小異，對於靜默的規則，起初頗有微言。其實，禁語的目的，是要讓參加者平息思緒，內心復歸靜止澄明，這樣便可理出一片虛空，聆聽案主，了解案主的苦難，從而洞察問題的癥結，對症下藥，提供治療的良方。師父鼓勵參加者放棄門戶之見，發現哪些工具是合適的，都可挪用，不必執著於個別心理學派的規條。禪營結束時， 各位心理治療師都經驗了深層的轉化，明白到自己內在的「佛性」，可以用來幫助案主。師父也反對利用打枕頭作為「發洩」怒氣的工具，而現在已有更多的心理學家同意，「發洩」只會灌溉暴力的種子，為負面的思維提供預習，結果更可能誘發出暴力行為。

他們狼吞虎嚥，食物一下子就吃光了，這才看見僧人仍然在吃，覺察地吃。

師父在美國多次帶領為**越戰退伍軍人**而設的禪營。我們第一次舉辦這類禪營時，真是挑戰重重。師父以一根燃點中的蠟燭為喻，說軍人便是燭芯燒得最熾熱的一點；但是，越戰的發生，是集體意識的結果，集體應負上責任，而不單是退伍軍人。師父邀請每位參加禪營的軍人找一棵樹，在樹旁坐下來，好好寫下自己的經驗，光照心中的慈悲或憤怒，然後把所寫的交給師父，讓師父可以貼近他們的經歷，進行開示。師父和眞空法師閱讀這些信件時，心裏都很痛苦，因為有幾封信描述了越南人受到的暴行，受害者還包括小孩。一位軍人講述他從直升機向地面掃射，達三天之久，之後看到地面的屍體，像砍下的木材撒滿一地，感到萬分震驚，因為在直昇機上時候，從未想像過情況會是如此。禪營中，他看到一個很年輕的姑娘，覺得就和他殺害過的越南人一模一樣。另一位軍人透露，自己一直不能和僧團一起練習行禪，因為每次看到越南僧人，總害怕會受到偷襲。

師父告訴退伍軍人說，當他們受戒持守五種覺醒修習、發誓不再殺害時，便可轉化。師父說：「也許你以前殺害了一個孩子，但此後每一天，在每一個當下，你可以拯救五個孩子，令他們免於死亡；去做和從前相反的事吧！」

師父要求他們把痛苦的經驗記下，然後把記錄燒掉，以示從新做人，從此得到自由。師父用一枝花向每一個人灑水，為他們潔淨，然後請軍人和越南人修習擁抱禪。所有住在附近的越籍美國人都獲邀參加，與軍人共修擁抱禪，目的是讓軍人感到獲得越南人的諒解和寬恕，大家現在是朋友了。我們共帶領了三個專為退伍軍人而設的禪營，現在，為軍人而設的項目已納入到規模更大的一般禪營，成為其中的一部份。

確認無常的真實

在梅村，我們也為**商業界的領導人**舉辦了一個禪營；營中，師父講述了一個真實而有力的故事。話說有位商人，常常跟太太和家人說，再多等一會吧，很快他就可以和他們一起了，因為他服務的企業正處關鍵時刻，沒了他實在不行。商人老是說，再過兩三年吧，到時便有多些時間共敘天倫了。但結果，商人英年早逝，他口中的時刻永遠沒出現，而不消幾小時，公司就找到人頂替了他的位置。師父分享這故事，是希望警醒大家，在日常生活裏確認無常的眞實性，至為重要。

師父教導修行者要生活在融洽中，大家可先從身邊最親密的幾個人做起，然後把關愛擴展到五位，二十位甚至一千位員工身上。他呼籲商界領導人，要給予員工多一些時間用膳，還要和員工一起用膳，甚至考慮在工作的地點，安排員工進行深層放鬆的練習；僱主和上司，要視員工為夥伴，關心員工的生活和員工的家人。師父最近遇到一位對下屬漠不關心的中國醫師，其中一位下屬對醫師很是不滿，終於對醫師一家下毒，結果只有醫師一人生還。禪營結束後三個月，很多參加者說，自己與員工和與其他人的關係，都有很正面的改變。一行禪師在這次禪營的開示已被輯錄成書，書名為《一行禪師談生命真正的快樂－－金錢與權力能帶給你什麼？》（Power），在韓國已售出二十萬本。

監獄中的身教

多年前，師父到美國瑪利蘭州的一所高度設防的監獄，為**囚犯**舉行了一天的覺醒修習。我們要經過十六道門，每經過一道門，就聽到它在身後重重鎖上。一眾囚犯聽過師父介紹禪食後，便開始進食，他們狼吞虎嚥，食物一下就吃光了，這才看見僧人仍然在吃，覺察地吃；也許，比起言教，這場身教更能在他們的心裏留下深刻的印象。很多人都好像被轉化了，紛紛問道︰「我眞的可以改變自己的生命嗎？」就在那一刻，就在監獄裏，他們已經開始做好事了。

我們探訪監獄時，很多東西都不可以帶進去，被禁的包括攝錄器材，像我們通常用來拍攝師父教學的攝錄機，就不准帶。於是，我們請獄警用他們的器材為我們拍下整個過程，也請求准許師父帶備自己的微型錄音機，作後備之用。本來他們是不願意的，幸好後來還是批准了，因為監獄裏的器材壞了，而我們自己錄得的講話，已編輯成書，名為《自在》（Be Free Where You Are ），已被譯成數種語文出版了，暫未有中文譯本。

2003 年，師父在美國展開禪修之旅，在全國多個地區帶領禪營。其中一個禪營，本來只為警察、獄警和其他執法人員舉辦，後來對象擴闊到其他公共服務行業，還特別包括了教師。進行開示時，師父提醒執法人員，要修習和平，日常可作行禪練習，以覺察又輕鬆的步伐，讓自己平靜下來；還要好好照顧家人，不要把家人當作下屬看待。師父提議的放鬆步行法，執法人員並不認同，因為他們在城市的危險地區執勤時，子彈可能從任何方向射來。師父於是建議，他們每次回家前，在居所附近修習行禪，修習完畢，才回家與家人見面；要知道，家人是心靈平安的基石。

五項五念修習

我們得悉一項驚人的統計數字，警察吞槍自盡的個案，數目遠比中彈殉職的個案為多，而工作壓力也迫使很多警察酗酒。我們建議他們在工作地點組織一個禪修之家，一起誦讀和討論五項五念修習，令生活變得更有中心、更有意義。如此，同事間便能保持新鮮感，建立深厚的友誼和聯繫，好像一家人那樣互相支持。為了讓這些公僕可以不涉宗教成分的方式，實行以上的建議（同時又考慮到美國的憲法規定，教會要和管治機關清楚劃分），我們舉辦了一個特別大會，傳授五項五念修習，在講授有關戒條時，完全沒有採用佛教的詞彙。

師父在這個和其他禪營中告訴**教師，**對於來自破碎家庭的孩子來說，學校是獲得滋養的第二個機會。教師要修習聆聽孩子，不但傳授知識，還要慈悲對待每一個孩子，切合其不同的需要給予教導，師父鼓勵教師技巧地在課堂上介紹覺醒修習，例如每天指派一個孩子，每隔十五分鐘拍掌一次，提醒大家暫停手邊的活動，專注呼吸。

把梅村看作一個佛教實驗室，為各種新「藥」做實驗。

在 2003 年的講學旅程中，師父也特別為**美國國會成員**舉辦了禪營。師父向他們說，我們關注別人，可由自己的核心家庭開始，然後把圈子擴大，把同事視作另一個家庭看待，餘此類推。國會議員公務繁忙，常常穿梭於家鄉和華盛頓之間，當他們回到辦公室，又有數不盡的文件要批閱和處理。很多參加這次禪營的議員認為，由辦公室以行禪的方式步行到投票地點，對他們最有幫助。

在不同的禪營中，師父都談到**家長**關注的各項問題。他說，很多單親媽媽會認為，有必要找一個男人來支持自己和孩子。但很多時，這樣的追求，比起一個人身兼父職母職更為複雜。師父教單親媽媽，要集中於自己的修習，令自己堅強、充實，心境保持快樂、平和；這樣，要是伴侶自然出現，就會很美妙。師父也對所有父母說：孩子是父母將來的延續，而父母則是孩子過去的延伸，事實上，我們沒有一個分割的自我，社會給予這一代的孩子，和過去給予孩子父母的，很是不同。所以，即使父母的弱點在孩子身上體現出來，也未必可輕易察覺，因為孩子的弱點看來是多麼的不同，它是以另一種形式展示出來的。當你能深入觀看，你只能說：「你跟我很像」。

與家人修補關係

幾年前，在德國奧登堡的一個禪營，師父談到，要及早與鬧翻的家人重修舊好，以免為時已晚。在禪營的第五天，師父鼓勵參加者在當晚午夜前與家人修和。與家人一起參加禪營的朋友，可以當面修和。至於大部分家人在遠方的參加者，師父准許他們用手提電話致電家人修補關係。翌日，四位男士向師父報告，他們在前一天晚上用手機與父親修和了——參加禪營之前，他們根本無法相信這是有可能的事。他們說，一切多得禪營教懂他們深入聆聽的技巧，又給他們練習的機會。我們肯定還有很多參加者與家人修和，但因害羞而不敢向師父報告吧了，這情況在我們每個禪營都會發生，只是形式不同而已。

在 2005 年 1 月至 4 四月期間，師父在經過了四十年的流放生活後，終於可以回到自己的家鄉**越南，**作了一次歷史性的回歸之旅。師父的代表團，包括了百位出家人和百位在家眾。越南政府內有很多人，對師父和他的代表團心存畏懼，深恐他們會組織遊行和集會，引起騷亂。師父的第一個公開講座在河內舉行，資深僧侶釋真法印在講座開始前一小時到達會場，看見到處都是守衛，很明顯是因為當局擔心會爆發暴亂。出乎師父和代表團的意料之外，只有十八人獲准進入會場，但師父如常對他們演講，跟對着三百人甚至三千人說話，沒有分別。

代表團探訪過不同地點、舉辦過幾輪演講後，由於代表團面對有關當局表現了很大的忍耐和慈悲，當局的恐懼明顯地減少了。師父獲准在西貢市舉行第二場公開講座，這次有六百人參加，而政府官員和警察也被邀出席。在我們的要求下，會場外安裝了揚聲器，接近一千人聽到師父的演說。在順化也有另一場公開講座，六百人到場參加，而場外幾千人，則透過揚聲器，聆聽師父的演講。當代表團回到河內時，師父在政治機構演講，接著又在一間大酒店內，安排了另一場演講，主講廳容納了一千位獲邀出席的賓客，另有六百人在講廳外聆聽。

深入聆聽作用大

在越南期間，師父向政府提出了七點建議，希望越南的佛教團體可逐步恢復元氣，並協助越南人解除因販毒等種種社會病態帶來的痛苦。師父倡議，越南兩個不同陣營的佛教團體，從此互相接納、彼此修和，要如兄弟般親切討論，不要如仇敵般互相呼喝。有一位過去在這事情上總是憤怒說話的高僧，現在也能友善地談論問題了。越南政府的態度也有很大改變，對師父的倡議表達了真摯的尊重和關注，也較以前尊重佛教、承認佛教對越南社會是有所貢獻的。政府也容許以前不獲政府批准的佛教民間團體重新組織起來。

奧頓堡和其他禪營的參加者都發現，深入聆聽在家庭中發揮很大的作用；在越南，我們發現深入聆聽在廣泛的社會層面，也是非常有效的。

總結

以上，我們提供了一些方法，把佛法用於今日世界的日常生活裡。佛法的應用仍有很多尚待發掘的地方，在更新佛陀的教導方面，還有很多工夫要下。今日社會大眾的心理和理解，跟佛陀時代的很是不同。科學、科技、醫療各方面都迅速發展，讓我們對大自然有了更深入的了解。要讓佛學和現代生活息息相關、要把佛學具體地應用於生活中，我們對佛陀的教導要有更深的了解，還要將之不斷更新。今日所有佛教徒，都要擔起這樣的責任，既要忠於自己的傳統，也要把傳統的教導，以巧妙的方式傳遞，使大家可以接受、從中得益。

過去二千六百年，佛教的傳統已發展了很多修習的技巧。我們謹以有限的能力和卑微的努力，嘗試更新佛教，把佛法帶到現代世界裡；我們看到，這是可行的。我們祈望所有佛教徒都可負起這重任。我們至今只是觸及表面，眼前仍有很漫長的路要走。在梅村，我們把我們的社區看作一個佛教的「實驗室」，在這裏我們為各種新「藥」做試驗， 當某一種藥物在實驗室證實有效，我們便和世界分享。在這篇文章，我們分享了梅村的一些實驗和我們覺得有用的技巧。我們誠邀其他傳統的兄弟姊妹參與，幫助佛陀在廿一世紀的西方國家裏，再轉法輪。